# THE DRAMA

Written by

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INT. DOWNTOWN COFFEE SHOP - DAY (MEMORY)

CHARLIE, a thirty-something British expat with a slender build and sympathetic face, enters a coffee shop and spots EMMA, also thirty-something, charming but reserved, reading at a window-side table. He orders a coffee and takes a seat, observing her with infatuation from a distance. When she gets up for a coffee refill, leaving her book on the table, Charlie walks over for a quick glance at the title. After sitting back down, he searches for the synopsis on his phone. Then he confidently approaches her:

CHARLIE
I love that book.. It’s great..
Just read it..
(beat)
I just finished it last week, so..
Uhm..
(beat)
Ok.. That’s all.

She doesn’t even bat an eye. Embarrassed and feeling the eyes of onlookers, Charlie returns to his table without making a connection. Resentment towards her starts to build, and he decides to leave. However, on his way out, he's struck by a sudden impulse to confront her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Just so you know: I wasn’t trying to hit on you.

Emma now removes an earbud she had in her left ear all along, finally giving him her attention.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
God forbid we talk to strangers, right? I genuinely just wanted to compliment the book.

EMMA
I’m sorry?

CHARLIE
The book, I was just telling you I liked it, that’s all.

EMMA
Oh, sorry, I didn’t hear you..

Charlie gives her a look of confusion.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I’m deaf, in this one..

She points to her right ear.

CHARLIE
Ohhh.. I’m such an idiot.

EMMA
Do you want to start over?

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
Try that again.

She puts her earbud back in and resumes reading her book. Charlie hesitates, unsure of what to do, but returns to his table. After a moment, he approaches again, circles to the other side of her table, and taps her shoulder. Emma removes her earbud and looks at him."

CHARLIE
That’s a great book, I just read it...

She smiles at him, he smiles back.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - DAY (PRESENT TIME)

Charlie, now three years later, is seated at his dining room table with a laptop in front of him, talking through his wedding speech with his friend MIKE.

CHARLIE
(reading)
“And after fifteen excruciating minutes of trying to improve my first impression, I miraculously got your number.”

MIKE
It’s such a good story.

CHARLIE
So I’ll open with that, then I’ll talk about our first date...

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT (MEMORY)

We see Emma and Charlie having dinner.

EMMA
So what did you think of the ending?

CHARLIE
Of what?

EMMA
The book. I finally finished it.

CHARLIE
Oh.. Uhm..

EMMA
I don’t think I got it, I’m not sure if I missed something?

CHARLIE
Oh, yeah the ending was a bit strange, wasn’t it?

EMMA
Yeah, what do you think happened? Did she die, or?

CHARLIE
That’s how I read it, yeah..

EMMA
But that doesn’t make any sense.

CHARLIE
It doesn’t?

EMMA
No, cause then what was that thing with the mirror?

CHARLIE
The mirror.. What was that again?

EMMA
That was like the whole thing. The ending. With the mirror.

CHARLIE
Oh, huh, I don’t really remember that part.

EMMA
Didn’t you say you just read it?

CHARLIE
...Yeah.

EMMA
But you don't remember the mirror?

CHARLIE
No, I guess I just thought it was like, a metaphor or something, cause like usually mirrors represent, you know, they're not real in the same sense that...
(drops the performance)
No, actually I didn't read it.

EMMA
What?

CHARLIE
Yeah, I have no idea what you're talking about, I just kind of glitched out when I saw you. I just wanted to talk to you.

EMMA
Really?

CHARLIE
Yeah..

EMMA
(with a smile)
You even doubled down, you creep!

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
(reading)
"Why I just didn't read the damn book speaks to my laziness, and why you didn't run out the door speaks to your extreme belief in finding the goodness in others."

MIKE
Rachel would've walked out...

CHARLIE
Then I have a whole paragraph about the way she laughs--

We cut away to a MONTAGE of moments of Emma laughing: at home, in a park, at a restaurant, in a bookstore. Her infectious and cute laugh never fails to move Charlie. Then, back in the present:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
And then, let's see...
(reading)
"You always reminds me to live life as a *comedy* and not as a *drama*"

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM (MEMORY)

Charlie, dressed in a t-shirt and sweatpants, stands in the living room, passionately venting about a frustrating work situation.

CHARLIE
And I even said it in the meeting: "why host a retrospective when we know he's a piece of shit?" but they just don't care. It's so irresponsible. And it *will* backfire. *For sure*.

Emma listens intently until, suddenly, she pulls his pants down. Despite this, he remains standing, completely serious.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Emma, I'm serious. This isn't funny.

EMMA
Yeah, I agree. It's not funny. At all.

There's a long beat where Charlie just stands there, staring at Emma, with his pants around his ankles, refusing to acknowledge the humor. Emma just stares back at him until he cracks, and with that we CUT back to:

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
And then.. I'm not sure if there's any good way to do it, but I kind of want to include something about--

We cut to a quick MONTAGE of Emma and Charlie having passionate sex across various settings: a bed, a bathroom, a couch, the floor of a hotel room. It seems they simply can't get enough of each other. Then, we return to the present moment, where Mike is staring at Charlie with a deadpan expression.

MIKE
No, you can't talk about fucking in front of your family, imagine Alan sitting right next to you.

CHARLIE
I know, I know... I just want to allude to it somehow, it's just so... I don't know, we're just very compatible, you know? Our bodies just...

Charlie starts articulating with his hands.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
The way we just... I mean it's kind of... You know...

MIKE
Do that. Exactly that.

Charlie freezes in the middle of a pornographic gesture.

CHARLIE
I'll just say *passionate*: "we've been passionately in love since day one."

MIKE
Good.

CHARLIE
Then I'll do the bit about her extreme empathy.

INT. RACHEL AND MIKE'S APARTMENT - DAY - MEANWHILE (PRESENT)

Emma is in tears, she can't even bring herself to speak, as Rachel is trying to console her. Emma starts laughing a little through the tears, she knows she's being overly sensitive.

EMMA
I'm sorry...

RACHEL
What about leading with something funnier? Something less emotional?

EMMA
No, I'll get through it on the day. I don't know why I'm being so sensitive right now.

RACHEL
What about the first time you met? Wasn't that kind of a funny story?

EMMA
Yeah, but--

INT. ALTO BOOKS - DAY (THREE WEEKS PRIOR)

Charlie and Emma are perusing the isles of a book store together, when Emma casually starts mentioning her speech.

EMMA
Which stories are you gonna use?

CHARLIE
You'll just have to wait and see.

EMMA
No, I mean, what if there's overlap? Are you doing the first time we met?

CHARLIE
Yes.

EMMA
The first date?

CHARLIE
Yes.

EMMA
Fuck!

CHARLIE
You don't *have* to do a speech.

EMMA
Oh, we're gonna be traditional all of a sudden?

CHARLIE
No, I'm just saying.

EMMA
What about the first kiss?

EXT. MUSEUM - NIGHT (MEMORY)

It's midnight, and Charlie has brought Emma to the museum where he works.

They stand at the foot of the grand steps leading up to the vast modernist stone building with its imposing glass doors. The interior is completely dark.

EMMA
Are you sure we can go in?

CHARLIE
Yes, I do it all the time.

EMMA
Yeah? You bring all the girls here?

CHARLIE
No, not like that, when I have to work late or something.

EMMA
(mocking)
Sure.

They walk up the stairs.

EMMA (CONT'D)
This was like my dream as a kid. I always fantasized about hiding in the mall or the library or something.

CHARLIE
Well, your dreams are about to come true.

Charlie uses his keycard and a code to get into the first set of big glass doors. Then there's another set of doors, and for some reason his code doesn't work there.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
That's strange.

EMMA
It's not working?

Charlie tries the code again, no luck. He swipes his card again.

CHARLIE
Hm..

He tries again and again, then attempts to push the door open, setting off the alarm.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Fuck!

They try to leave out the door they came in, but it's now locked, trapping them in the little space between the entrance doors. Charlie looks at Emma: she's covering just her left ear from the sound of the alarm. Charlie is moved by the sight and kisses her. Emma wraps her other arm around him and kisses him back.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - (PRESENT)

Emma is with her co-worker ALICE and Rachel at a coffee shop. They're seated at a table near the window.

RACHEL
I bet that was on purpose.

ALICE
What about the time you made me call your doctor, when you thought you'd been drugged.

RACHEL
What?

EMMA
Oh my god, I almost forgot about that.

RACHEL
What happened?

INT. MISSION PUBLISHING - DAY (MEMORY)

Charlie is seeing Emma's offices for the first time, they're standing by the entrance.

CHARLIE
Where do you sit?

Emma points at her empty desk in the open-plan office of Mission Publishing, the independent press where she works.

EMMA
I'm right there.

And then she points to Alice, sitting on the desk next to it.

EMMA (CONT'D)
And that's my dear friend Alice.

Alice looks up, Charlie waves at her, she nods and smiles back.

CHARLIE
(joking)
Well, good to see you have a real job.

EMMA
(smirking)
Oh, *that's* why you wanted to come up.

They smile and kiss, sharing an almost annoying amount of affection, which Alice notices.

CHARLIE
See you later maybe?

EMMA
Yeah, text me.

They kiss again, and then he leaves. As Emma walks back to her desk, she suddenly halts, a feeling of unease washing over her. She struggles to catch her breath, sensing that something is terribly wrong.

ALICE
You OK?

Emma's heart is racing.

EMMA
I'm just gonna.. Two seconds.

Emma rushes over to the bathroom.

INT. MISSION PUBLISHING - BATHROOM - DAY (MEMORY)

Emma stands in front of the mirror, her hands clutching her chest. "What is wrong with me?" she wonders. She drinks water straight from the sink, then checks her pulse while staring at her own reflection.

INT. MISSION PUBLISHING - LATER (MEMORY)

Emma sits on the couch, confused and breathing heavily, clutching her chest. More CO-WORKERS gather around her, one fanning her face with a book, while Alice frantically speaks with a doctor on the phone.

ALICE
She's saying it's her chest, like she's been drugged or something.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY - (PRESENT)

RACHEL
What was it?

EMMA
It was just... feelings.

RACHEL
Feelings? What do you mean?

ALICE
Like intense butterflies, right?

RACHEL
No, I get that, but it wasn't your first time?

EMMA
I don't know, I think so. That level at least.

RACHEL
What about like high school?

EMMA
No... Didn't even date.

RACHEL
So Charlie is your...

EMMA
First love, yeah, I think so.

RACHEL
(in disbelief)
First love, or first *crush*?

EMMA
I mean, both I guess?

RACHEL
At thirty two?!

EMMA
I was thirty when we met, basically twenty nine!

RACHEL
Still!

EMMA
(laughing)
I don’t know, I used to be weird and ugly!

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

MIKE
How are you gonna end it?

CHARLIE
Well there’s a couple of ways. I have another story I could throw in there. Might be a little sappy though...

MIKE
Ok? What is it?

Charlie hesitates, then inhales.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - MORNING (MEMORY)

A close-up shows Charlie whispering something into Emma's right ear.

CHARLIE
(whispering)
Stay very still, don’t freak out, there’s a huge spider on your back.

We cut to a wider shot where Charlie removes his hand from blocking her other ear.

EMMA
Nothing.

CHARLIE
Nothing?

EMMA
Nope.

CHARLIE
Ok, one more time.

Charlie blocks her ear again, and leans in to whisper.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I love you so much it hurts. I can't be without you.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's scary because I can't imagine life without you anymore, and I don’t know what to do if you don’t feel the same. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, I want to marry you, but I’m too afraid to even ask.

He moves his head away, letting go again. They stare at each other for a long time.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Nothing?

EMMA
(smiling)
A hairy knife? Or something?

Charlie scoffs and shakes his head as he holds back his tears.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT (PRESENT TIME)

Charlie looks up from his screen and over to Mike who’s now trying to hide his tears.

CHARLIE
Are you OK?

MIKE
Yeah.

CHARLIE
This is just the outline.

MIKE
I know, it’s just... Weddings...

CHARLIE
But what do you think?

MIKE
It’s good.

CHARLIE
Can you be more specific?

MIKE
Uhm.. Yeah, it’s good. It’s a little corny in a wedding speech kind of way, but all the pieces are there. I like the new structure, I think it’s almost there.

CHARLIE
Ok, you can't cry *and* say it sucks.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - LATER

Emma and Charlie stand facing each other in the center of a dance studio, its wood-paneled walls lined with mirrors. A forty-five-year-old female INSTRUCTOR, standing to the side, starts the music from a phone connected to the stereo.

As the music plays, an old and slow romantic song, they begin their dance routine. The instructor watches closely, and the INTRO CREDITS appear on the screen. Though they fumble occasionally, for the most part, their movements are in sync. When the song ends they freeze in their final positions.

INSTRUCTOR
OK, that wasn't bad! We're getting there!

Emma's not really feeling it. Charlie senses something's up.

CHARLIE
(to Emma)
What?

EMMA
No... I don't know. Is it just a little boring?

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
The song. It's not very, like, festive.

CHARLIE
Come on, let's not go over this again.

EMMA
I know, I know, I'm just...

CHARLIE
(to instructor)
Back me up on this.

INSTRUCTOR
It's good! It's classic, it's romantic, and we're getting so close.

EMMA
OK, what about... Two seconds. Just hear me out.

Emma walks over to the instructor, grabs the phone and types something in. Then a very upbeat disco track starts, which Charlie immediately recognizes. Emma grins. The instructor is confused.

INSTRUCTOR
What's this?

CHARLIE
It's a joke. It's called "I love this life."

EMMA
It's not a joke.

CHARLIE
She puts it on when I'm in a bad mood just to fuck with me.
(to Emma)
Come on, turn it off, we're not doing that.

EMMA
But it's so fun! And they're British!

CHARLIE
They're Scottish.

EMMA
Whatever!

Emma dances over to him, grabs him and forces him to dance with her. The instructor watch them goof around, both of them now laughing, and she gets angry and rips the cord out.

INSTRUCTOR
Guys!

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Emma and Charlie are walking through the city, still giggling after their dance lesson.

EMMA
She didn't have to yell!

CHARLIE
I know, I know, but she’s right, it’s too late to switch.

Charlie notices a woman standing on the side of the street as they walk past.

EMMA
But why does she even care? If we look bad it’s on us. She’s not gonna be there, no one’s gonna judge *her*. I don’t get why she’s treating this as her personal work of art?

Charlie seem occupied with something.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What?

CHARLIE
That was Pauline.

EMMA
Where?

CHARLIE
Over there. Smoking heroin.

EMMA
Are you serious?

CHARLIE
Yes.

They stop and look back over at a guy and a girl standing outside the entrance of a closed shop, smoking heroin out of tinfoil.

EMMA
It can’t be...

CHARLIE
I’m telling you it’s her.

EMMA
You don’t think you were just thinking about her? Because of the music?

CHARLIE
Go look for yourself.

Emma hesitates, then walks slowly over to them, staring at them while they smoke, realizing he was right.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Emma, Charlie, Mike, and Rachel are seated at a single, decorated table in the center of a vast, empty dining hall in an old manor house. They are choosing from five different wine bottles displayed on the table.

MIKE
No!

CHARLIE
It was her! Our fucking wedding DJ.

RACHEL
You're kidding?

CHARLIE
No.

MIKE
Are you sure it was heroin?

EMMA
I guess we can't prove it was heroin.

CHARLIE
It was that or fentanyl. They were doing the whole tinfoil thing.

MIKE
Shit.

RACHEL
Did you talk to her?

EMMA
No.. She didn't see us.

MIKE
So what are you gonna do?

CHARLIE
Well *I* think we should fire her.

EMMA
The wedding's this Saturday!

CHARLIE
Or we just make a playlist or something.

MIKE
No, you need a DJ, trust me.

CHARLIE
Who did yours again?

MIKE
No one. It was a disaster.

IMOGENE, the sommelier enters the room.

IMOGENE
How's everything tasting?

EMMA
Great.

CHARLIE
I think I might need another glass of that skin contact. I can't really decide.

MIKE
Yeah, me too actually.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Imogene walks to the kitchen with two empty bottles of wine, and picks out another two. CARSON, the cook, sees what she's doing and makes a comment:

CARSON
We're not a bar.

IMOGENE
They're having fun.

CARSON
Yeah, again.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

They're drinking more wine as the DJ discussion continues.

EMMA
(to Charlie)
*Your* friend said she was great, that's why we hired her in the first place.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but Ben's wedding was a year ago.

RACHEL
Are you just scared you won't find someone else, or?

EMMA
No, I just don't think it's a dealbreaker. We've all done drugs.

RACHEL
I mean, there's drugs, then there's heroin.

EMMA
That's the line? I mean, she's not a surgeon.

MIKE
Isn't it more the fact that she was doing it on the street? That it says something about where she's at in life?

EMMA
Maybe she was on her way to a party.

CHARLIE
Why are you suddenly being her publicist?

EMMA
Cause I don't want to completely dismiss her based on this one thing.

CARSON and IMOGENE enter with new plates of food and more wine.

CARSON
All right, here's the mushroom risotto, that cream is gonna go ahead and be coconut milk. And then we also have the cauliflower steak with a white pepper corn glaze.

CHARLIE
Looks great.

EMMA
I’m sorry we’re changing things up so last minute.

CARON
No, happy to accommodate.

IMOGENE
And we have a couple of options to pair: This is a Grüner Veltliner from Austria, it has notes of pepper and citrus, which goes well with the risotto. And then we have this Albariño from Rías Baixas, which is one of my personal favorites, kind of an all-arounder.

EMMA
(whispers to Charlie)
I’m kind of getting drunk.

CHARLIE
(whispers back)
Just have a taste.

Wine is being poured, toasts are made, they dig in.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(mocking the accent)
“Rías Baixas Albariño”

EMMA
(laughing)
Stop.

RACHEL
You know, I barely touched the food at our wedding. Too much adrenaline.

MIKE
Yeah, then we ran around at two AM looking for a slice of pizza.

RACHEL
Yeah, be prepared guys.

CHARLIE
Maybe we have to stop by the diner..?

EMMA
On Woodland?

CHARLIE
Yeah, I think they're open twenty four hours.

EMMA
We can't go there on our wedding night!

CHARLIE
No, it'll be cool, it's like what movie stars do when they win an Oscar, with the tux and everything.

MIKE
Yeah, just you and the crackheads.

CHARLIE
Which reminds me, what do we do about "DJ overdose"?

EMMA
Don't be mean!

MIKE
Find someone else.

EMMA
Ok, last thing I'll say is that we liked her when we met her, and if we hadn't seen her today we probably wouldn't even have a problem.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but we did, and I can't just ignore it now.

EMMA
Well, that's a "you problem" then.

MIKE
What if she was a pedophile?

EMMA
That's different.

MIKE
Why?

EMMA
Because I don't think it's morally wrong to put a chemical in your own body to feel better.

CHARLIE
Yeah, and you know what, maybe it could actually be an advantage.

EMMA
What do you mean?

CHARLIE
I mean, if it gets really late and the party's still going, we'll have a drug dealer right there.

They all laugh.

EMMA
For all we know we might have caught her on her worst day.

MIKE
Yeah, which is good, because now you can fire her.

EMMA
What, you never do anything bad in your free time?

MIKE
Not that bad.

RACHEL
What about the dog story?

MIKE
Don't.

EMMA
What's the dog story?

Emma looks at Charlie.

CHARLIE
(to Emma)
I don't know.
(then to Mike)
What is it?

MIKE
It's nothing.

RACHEL
Just tell the story.

MIKE
Rachel. Please.

RACHEL
Before we got married we did this thing where we both shared the worst thing we'd ever done.

MIKE
Yes, and then we said we'd never speak about it again.

CHARLIE
If you don't say what it is I'm gonna assume you fucked a dog, Mike.

MIKE
I didn't fuck a dog, Charlie.

RACHEL
You want *me* to tell it?

MIKE
No! I want nobody to tell it.

RACHEL
Come on, I'll do mine too.

MIKE
Ok. Here's the deal: I'll tell mine if we all do it.

CHARLIE
Sure.

MIKE
Promise.

CHARLIE
I promise.

MIKE
Okay. This is about my ex-girlfriend who I dated in college.

CHARLIE
Tessa?

MIKE
Yeah, exactly. We'd been together for about a year, and for her birthday, we went to Mexico to celebrate. She... I don't know... She had anger issues, she wasn't really grateful for the trip, we argued a lot, and—

RACHEL
Don't sugarcoat it.

MIKE
OK! I'm just saying... the vibes were already off. And one night, we were walking home from a bar, this was actually on her birthday, and we're cutting through this back alley to get to our place, and out of nowhere, this dog starts barking and snapping at us. No owner in sight, just a wild crazy street dog. Instinctively she tries to kick it away, which only makes it go even crazier, and it actually starts biting her.

RACHEL
And what did you do?

MIKE
So I kind of move behind her--

RACHEL
Used her as a human shield.

MIKE
I mean--

RACHEL
That's what you said, you held her in front of you to avoid getting bitten.

EMMA
Oh my god...

MIKE
Yeah, Ok, I used her as a human shield.

CHARLIE
On her birthday!

EMMA
Like that makes a difference...

MIKE
And it was bad, there was blood everywhere. Luckily, these local guys came out of nowhere and chased the dog away.

CHARLIE
That was supposed to be your job!

MIKE
Well, I took her to the hospital at least! I *sort of* saved her. She had this crazy infection on her leg, her skin grew into like a huge swollen ball.

EMMA
Eww...

CHARLIE
She had to get surgery, or?

MIKE
Yeah, and she had to stay at the hospital for like a week, which I couldn’t do.

EMMA
You left her there?

MIKE
I mean, yeah, I had no choice, I had like a really important meeting. And she didn’t really need me either...

CHARLIE
What a horrible little piece of shit you were.

RACHEL
Still is!

MIKE
Oh yeah? Tell them yours then.

Rachel gives him the evil eye.

CHARLIE
Yeah, let’s hear it Rachel.

RACHEL
No, I regret it, I take it back.

MIKE
If you don't tell it I will, and I'll make it sound so much worse.

RACHEL
Ok, ok.. Just a second.

She doesn't say anything for several seconds.

MIKE
She--

RACHEL (CONT'D)
I locked a kid in a closet.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Come on, the full story.

RACHEL
Fine... I had this really weird neighbor, growing up. He was a few years younger than me, kind of slow, and one day he came over to my house, wanting to show me this abandoned RV he'd found in the woods... Uhm, and I guess I must have been bored that day, because I just went with it. And it was really out of the way, like deep into the forest, and when we got there it was like disgusting: it smelled bad, there's beer bottles and like porn everywhere.

CHARLIE
And that's where you met Mike?

MIKE
(laughing)
Fuck you.

RACHEL
Uhm... And at first I was like "why am I even here?" but then I see this empty closet and dare him to get in... And then something came over me and I just slammed the door and locked it. He immediately starts screaming, really loud, and I panic, and just run away.

CHARLIE
Why didn't you just open it?

RACHEL
He was like going crazy, it just freaked me out, I didn't know what to do, so I ran home and didn't say a word.

EMMA
What?

CHARLIE
You trapped him?

RACHEL
Yeah.

CHARLIE
So what happened to him?

RACHEL
I don't know.

CHARLIE
What do you mean?

RACHEL
I remember his dad coming to our house later that day looking for him. But I was so scared of getting in trouble I didn't even say anything. And when I woke up there was already a search party going.

CHARLIE
He was stuck there overnight?

RACHEL
Yeah.

CHARLIE
Wait, what?

RACHEL
He's alive, don't worry, they found him. But nobody ever asked me about it, it never got back to me for some reason.

CHARLIE
Cause he was scared of you, obviously.

RACHEL
Yeah, I mean, maybe.

EMMA
What if they hadn’t found him?

RACHEL
I would have said something.

CHARLIE
Sounds like you didn’t.

RACHEL
Yeah, but they just found him before I got a chance to.

CHARLIE
(joking)
Wow, and I thought Mike was the twisted one.

RACHEL
Stop!

CHARLIE
I’m starting to see why you guys are together.

MIKE
Ok, Charlie, let’s hear yours then...

CHARLIE
Uhm... No, I don’t know... Emma?

EMMA
No, I don’t like this game. You go.

MIKE
Just top of mind. First thing you think of.

CHARLIE
Uhm... Ok, I’ve already told Emma this... I must’ve been like twenty-two? And I had this date with a girl at a bar, and as soon as I meet her I realize she has a missing finger, this one.

He points to his ring finger.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
And I just couldn’t get past it, so I made up some bad excuse to leave.

RACHEL
No, really?

CHARLIE
Yeah, I was just fixating. Like, I couldn't even hold a conversation. So I pretended to get a phone call and I was like, "I gotta take this" and just left her there.

RACHEL
Poor girl!

MIKE
Was she good looking?

CHARLIE
Yeah. She was, and really nice too. I felt so guilty after... What did you say again Emma?

EMMA
What?

CHARLIE
You said something about my guilt creating a disability-fetish or something?

EMMA
Oh yeah, I was just making a joke about my ear.

RACHEL
Do you consider that a fetish--I mean disability?

CHARLIE
Yes, being deaf is considered a fetish now actually, especially if it's just the one ear.

MIKE
But, wait, that can't be *the worst*.

CHARLIE
I mean, that's the first that came to mind..?

MIKE
Cause if anything, it's shallow, not morally wrong.

CHARLIE
All right, well... I mean... I cyber-bullied someone. Pretty badly.

RACHEL
When?

CHARLIE
I don't know, like fourteen?

MIKE
Ok, who cares about that? Fourteen? Your brain isn't even fully developed till you're like twenty five or something.

RACHEL
And yours might not even get there.

MIKE
(mocking)
Funny Rachel!

CHARLIE
I'm sure I have worse... I just... Ahh... I just need to think about it.

RACHEL
Ok, Emma then.

EMMA
Uhm...

MIKE
Wait! Can I guess?

EMMA
Sure...

MIKE
When you bumped into that car.

EMMA
You think *that's* the worst thing I've ever done?

MIKE
Yes.

EMMA
Oh my god... No, it's way worse.

RACHEL
What?

CHARLIE
Do I know about this?

EMMA
No, I haven't told anyone.

MIKE
So what is it?

Emma doesn't immediately dish it out, so they're sitting there, smiling, anticipating, encouraging, before Emma suddenly blurts it out:

EMMA
I almost, like... did a mass shooting.

MIKE
What?

CHARLIE
What do you mean..?

EMMA
I was sixteen, and going through something, like clearly not doing well, and I planned to like, bring a weapon to school... And--

CHARLIE
You planned a school shooting?

EMMA
Yeah. I got really close to doing it too.

MIKE
Come on...

CHARLIE
You're joking...

Rachel seems a bit bothered, but Charlie and Mike are still acting amused.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Like, you fantasized about it, or?

EMMA
No, I mean, like I was ready to do it.
(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)
I even brought a weapon to school one day, in a duffel bag, just to feel it out.

RACHEL
Shut the fuck up.

EMMA
I’m serious.

CHARLIE
What weapon?

EMMA
My dad’s rifle. He had like a hunting rifle.

MIKE
I don’t believe this for one second.

EMMA
It’s true! It’s actually why I’m deaf! I was practicing and held it too close.

CHARLIE
What? Isn’t that a birth defect?

EMMA
No, I’ve just never told you cause it’s embarrassing. I was was alone, like, shooting in the forest and my ear just popped, blood started dripping out and that was that.

They are all stunned to silence.

EMMA (CONT'D)
But listen, I didn’t actually do anything! I know it’s insane to even have the idea, but nothing happened. I was just a confused little idiot.

RACHEL
You know that my cousin is in a wheelchair because of a shooting, right?

EMMA
I... No, I, I didn’t.

MIKE
Maybe we should--

RACHEL
Are you fucking serious?

EMMA
Ok, see, this is why I've never told anyone.

CHARLIE
So this actually happened?

RACHEL
This is like really fucking disturbing, I don't even know how to respond to this...

CHARLIE
Ok, let's maybe move on, and-

RACHEL
Move on?! She just said she planned a school shooting! How do you move on from that?

CHARLIE
I, I mean, I just think we should--

EMMA
I'm sorry I said anything!

RACHEL
Emma, what the fuck?

EMMA
I was sixteen!

RACHEL
That's an excuse!? That makes it OK? You were sixteen?

Emma now feels extremely shameful, not able to speak.

EMMA
I'm drunk, I shouldn't have... Let's just...

RACHEL
You're drunk? What's that gotta do with it? Are you lying?

EMMA
No... I... No...

CHARLIE
Maybe you need to just explain a bit more Emma, I don't--

RACHEL
You know what, I don't want to hear another word from her. It's fine. I'll leave.

EMMA
Rachel, I'm.. I know it's insane, I was just confused...

MIKE
Yeah. Let me... Uh... Maybe I'll get an Uber. I think we should--

CHARLIE
Wait, come on guys. She's drunk. We had a lot tonight. Right?

RACHEL
Sam is like actually paralyzed because of that!

CHARLIE
Who's Sam?

RACHEL
My cousin! My fucking cousin!

CHARLIE
Sorry! I didn't know his name.

RACHEL
Samantha! I've told you about her!

Imogene walks in to find the party in shambles.

IMOGENE
Is everything all right?

CHARLIE
Uhm.. Could we get some more water actually?

IMOGENE
Yes, of course. Be right back.

Imogene rushes away. The room is left in an awkward silence. Emma gets up from her seat, sweating, seemingly distressed.

EMMA
I'm-- I'm not feeling good. I--

Emma vomits all over the table. Everyone reacts in horror, almost jumping out of the way. Imogene walks in at that moment.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Mike, Rachel and Charlie are sitting waiting in the foyer together, while we hear the sound of Emma puking in the bathroom. Mike looks at his phone.

MIKE
Seven minutes..

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Charlie sort of carries Emma into the apartment.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Charlie helps Emma brush her teeth.

CHARLIE
When did you get so drunk?

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Charlie puts Emma to bed. She falls asleep instantly. Charlie takes off his clothes and lies down next to her. He's watching her for a long time, trying to make sense of her. *Who is she?*

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DAY (DREAM)

A floating camera slowly takes us through a wedding venue. There's been a massacre, there's dead guests with blood seeping out of bullet holes in their festive attire. A small group of people are running away in panic, far away in the background. There must be over a hundred casualties.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Charlie wakes up early. He looks over at Emma who's still sleeping. He gets out of bed.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Charlie walks over to a closet and retrieves a shoebox filled with old documents and photos. He's searching for something specific. He finds it: a teenage photo of Emma. Turning it over, he discovers a date: November 2007. He looks at the photo of young Emma again, picturing the scene she described:

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY (IMAGINATION)

Emma at sixteen, walking down the hallways of her school, carrying the duffel bag with the rifle, without anyone noticing. She seems menacing. Evil. His imagination drifts over to...

EXT. RURAL FOREST AREA - DAY (IMAGINATION)

...Emma, at sixteen, in a forest aiming the rifle at a tree and firing. The shots are so loud they damage her ear. Reacting strongly, she drops the rifle and clutches her bleeding ear. Suddenly and seamlessly, it’s the adult Emma sitting there, with the rifle, bleeding out of her ear.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - THAT MORNING (PRESENT)

Emma wakes up in a sunlit bedroom, feeling hungover and disoriented. Charlie has left a glass of water and a couple of painkillers on her bedside table. She quickly takes them with the water. After getting up, she wanders through the empty apartment. Noticing an open closet in the hallway, she sits down in the living room, filled with worry about Charlie’s whereabouts. Her mind races to the worst:

EXT. PARK - DAY (IMAGINATION)

Charlie and Mike are walking through a park, both seeming distressed.

CHARLIE
I mean, she’s insane, she has to be, right?

MIKE
Yes, she’s obviously not the person you thought she was.

CHARLIE
What the fuck do I do? The wedding’s this weekend.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
My family’s about to fly in, we’ve spent so much money.

MIKE
We’ll figure all of that stuff out, you’re not marrying a psychopath. Fly back to London, leave right now, don’t even go back to the apartment. Just get away as fast as you can.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

Emma sits there, lost in thought, when suddenly Charlie enters the apartment with a take-out coffee in hand.

EMMA
Where were you?

CHARLIE
I got a coffee on the corner.

EMMA
You talk to Mike?

CHARLIE
No..?
(beat)
How are you feeling?

EMMA
Not great.

CHARLIE
Do you... Remember what happened?

EMMA
Yes. Of course...

CHARLIE
Do you want to talk about it?

EMMA
I mean... Not really.

A beat, Charlie looks at her, almost investigating her.

CHARLIE
Is it true?

EMMA
...Yes.

CHARLIE
Why haven’t you ever told me? Why say it in front of everyone?

EMMA
I don’t know, it just happened, it wasn’t exactly planned!

CHARLIE
Were you just never gonna tell me then?

EMMA
I don’t know. Yeah, maybe.

CHARLIE
Yeah, well, you did, so might as well tell me everything.

She doesn’t speak.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Can you try to explain? Can you tell me the whole story?

She stays mute. Charlie sits down opposite her and puts his coffee down.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
How did you get that idea? Why did you want to... Shoot up your school?

EMMA
I don’t know! I was a fucking idiot. I was desperate and angry and... I don’t even fucking know. I honestly don’t!

CHARLIE
Hey.. Come on, just.. Calm down, Just tell me what you were going through... How did it get so bad for you?

EMMA
Can we do this later?

CHARLIE
Why?

EMMA
I look like shit and we’re meeting Frances.

CHARLIE
Let’s just cancel.

EMMA
We can’t! It’s the only time she has!

CHARLIE
Ok, well, I mean, we can’t *not* talk about it, you have to give me *something*.

EMMA
Or what? You’re not gonna marry me?

CHARLIE
That’s not what I’m saying! I just need to understand. You just told me you almost committed mass murder. I’m a little confused.

EMMA
Oh my god, please don’t say it like that! You’re making it sound so horrible.

CHARLIE
What? That’s what you said!

EMMA
Ok, I’ve ruined it. I have. You don’t have to marry me. Seriously.

CHARLIE
Emma, please try to listen to me. I just need us to talk about it.

EMMA
But I don’t want it to be on our minds, I don’t want this to be the focus.

CHARLIE
Yeah, well, I won’t be able to move on if we don’t talk about it.

Emma doesn’t know what to do.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Emma, I won’t judge, but I need to know. You need to talk to me.

EMMA
Jesus.. Ok. I was fifteen. My dad got a new job and we had to move.. To Richmond. That’s when things got really bad for me. I didn’t make any friends, I thought people hated me for some reason, and I started thinking something was seriously wrong with me.

CHARLIE
Did you get bullied, or?

EMMA
Uhm.. I mean.. Yeah.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY (MEMORY)

Emma, fifteen, is leaving school, passing a bunch of students on her way, when SALLY, a fellow student yells:

SALLY
You ever heard of deodorant?

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
....That’s it?

EMMA
No, that’s just one example.

CHARLIE
Ok..

Emma remains silent. She remembers something:

INC. SCHOOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY (MEMORY)

Young Emma is alone in the hallway during class, with all the students' outerwear hanging on hooks outside the classroom. She takes the jackets, one by one, and throws them out the hallway window.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

EMMA
This isn’t gonna make sense.

CHARLIE
What do you mean?

EMMA
It’s just gonna sound insane, I’m not a victim, I wasn’t.. “Pushed to the edge.” There wasn’t ever a real reason.

CHARLIE
But something must have motivated you?

EMMA
Maybe I was just evil!

CHARLIE
No, come on.

EMMA
No, I’m serious. I think that’s it.

CHARLIE
No, I remember that age.. How dramatic everything felt, I get it. You were upset.

EMMA
Yeah...

CHARLIE
So how did you go from there to... Where you went? How did you get the idea?

EMMA
I mean, it wasn’t exactly a new idea, it was happening all the time. And I was intrigued I guess.

CHARLIE
Intrigued...

EMMA
Yeah. And I wasn’t alone, there were all these people online that I came across.

CHARLIE
What people?

EMMA
Just like trolls I guess, misanthropic angry teens who were competing to say the most fucked up things... We were like chatting every day, and I really wanted to impress them for some reason.

CHARLIE
Like what? What would you say?

EMMA
I'd send photos of me holding the rifle, lying about crazy things I was gonna do, which they thought was so cool, you know, coming from a girl.

We see a MONTAGE of those low quality web cam photos, taken in her bedroom, posing with the rifle.

CHARLIE
So this was like a feminist thing for you?

EMMA
I don't know. No, I think it just made me special to them, you know, the idea that I could be the first female school shooter. And I just started believing in this character I was playing.

INT. CHILDHOOD HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT (MEMORY)

We see Young Emma recording her confessional video while holding the rifle.

EMMA
This will be shocking. How could a girl do this? I want everyone to remember--

The recording stops. She is asked to install an update for the webcam. She does, and waits for it to install. Then tries recording again.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I know my actions will seem shocking, especially coming from a girl.

She gets a blue screen error, and has to restart the computer. She waits for it to restart, it takes forever. We hear an ALARM going off...

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

...from Emma’s phone. She looks at it.

EMMA
Shit..

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
We have to go.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - LATER

FRANCES, a passionate thirty-five-year-old photographer, is seated at her desk in her bespoke photo studio, which is sparingly decorated with vintage furniture, plants and an assortment of photo backdrops and gear. She discusses the shot-list with Emma and Charlie, who are seated opposite her, trying to appear casual. Two other ASSISTANTS are rigging for a separate photo gig in the background throughout the scene.

FRANCES
I’ll shoot you first, then your parents, then I’ll shoot you and your parents, then I’ll do the maid, grandparents, and.. You don’t have any siblings, right?

Emma and Charlie both are sensitive to the word “shooting.”

EMMA
No.

FRANCES
Ok, so then I’ll shoot ring-bearer, then your full length, back of dress, putting on veil.
(then to Mike)
Then I’ll shoot you, same thing: with and without parents, with your sister, with best man, then grandparents.

CHARLIE
They might not make it actually..

EMMA
What? They’re not coming?

CHARLIE
I’m not sure.. The travel might be too much..

FRANCES
Ok, shooting grandparents TBD, but I’ll get your full length, close up of the rings, signing the certificate, the first dance, cake cutting, bouquet toss, and then I’ll get a bunch of candids throughout. Does that feel like it covers everything?

CHARLIE
Uhmm.. Yeah..

FRANCES
I’ll send you the shotlist so you have it, and let me know if you want to add anything. I’m there for you guys, not me.

THEN MOMENTS LATER:

Emma and Charlie are posing: he’s sitting on a stool, she’s standing by him.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
So, think about what you want to express. Think about what you love about your partner.

Emma and Charlie look at each other, the elephant clearly still in the room. They don’t look fully comfortable with each other.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Emma.. What’s your favorite thing about Charlie?

EMMA
Uhm.. That he’s very smart, very curious and open minded, understanding. And handsome.

FRANCES
Good. Keep those in mind. And Charlie?

CHARLIE
Uhm.. She’s kind, and empathetic. Funny. Intelligent. Beautiful. Empathetic.

EMMA
You already said that.

FRANCES
Double empathy, that’s good! Ok, hold on to these thoughts!

Frances starts taking photos of Emma and Charlie as they work hard to seem normal.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Charlie, try holding her hand.

CHARLIE
Like this?

FRANCES
Yeah. Yeah. That’s nice.

She keeps snapping. They start losing their smiles.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Don’t forget to smile!

They force a smile again. Frances keeps taking photos, but something is off.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Try to give off more of a, you know: *you’re in love*! *And you want to show it!*

EMMA
Right..

An assistant suddenly puts on romantic music in the background, attempting to ramp the mood. Emma and Charlie exchange glances and then, with a renewed effort, try again.

FRANCES
You know each other really well, and you’re very comfortable with each other.

They get closer.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Yeah. Nice. Maybe get behind her, Charlie. Arms around her. Yes. That’s nice.

She keeps taking photos.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
And really bring those thoughts to mind.

The flash keeps hitting their faces. Then suddenly Emma is seamlessly replaced by YOUNG EMMA, the sixteen-year-old version of herself, now standing beside Charlie as they are photographed. This segues into a MONTAGE: a series of moments showing Charlie and Young Emma as a couple: dining at a restaurant, getting married, honeymooning in Italy, on a boat, exploring a marketplace, and basking in the sunset. In every scene, Charlie's discomfort is palpable. We then CUT BACK to the PRESENT, with Charlie and Emma continuing to smile and pose for the camera.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Great. Ok. We got it. This is great.

Charlie and Emma both drop their smiles and poses, stopping their performances.

INT. FLORIST - LATER THAT DAY

Emma and Charlie are both sitting, waiting to be helped in a shop filled with flowers and plants on rustic wooden shelves in festive arrangements, a stark contrast to the couple's somber mood. The camera shifts back and forth between them, capturing their deep immersion in thought. Gradually, the focus narrows onto Charlie’s face, zooming in closer and closer, as his mind drifts to a memory:

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT (MEMORY)

They’re in bed. Emma kisses him on the face, then bites him, and Charlie reacts with a small scream. Then as they continue, Emma sits on top of him, riding him, and starts choking him, which Charlie doesn’t like, and takes her hand to stop her:

CHARLIE
Don’t do that please.

EMMA
Oh, I’m sorry.

CHARLIE
No, it’s fine. I just don’t like that.

EMMA
Oh my god, I’m so sorry, I won’t do it again.

INT. FLORIST - (PRESENT)

We jump back to the present and see Charlie and Emma both deep in thought, when suddenly the sound of people running and screaming on the street outside catches their attention. At first, it's not clear if there's a real threat as a bunch of teenagers sprint up the sidewalk past the store, but it quickly becomes obvious they're just a group of friends messing around. Emma and Charlie exchange glances, each aware of what the other is thinking.

EMMA
(emotional)
Does it just feel wrong now? Do you want to call it off? I understand if you do...

Then, the FLORIST approaches them.

FLORIST
(super positive vibe)
Thank you guys for waiting, welcome back! How’s everything going?! Big day is coming up, right?

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

They enter their apartment, returning from their busy day, finally alone again. They remove their outerwear, sit down in the living room, and then:

CHARLIE
Ok, so.. Continue..

Emma takes a deep breath, and we cut to:

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY (MEMORY)

Emma, sixteen, is skipping class and trying to break the lock on a back door entrance of the school with a screwdriver. Suddenly, she hears sobbing sounds coming from around the corner in the hallway. Curious, she goes to investigate.

Turning the corner, she finds a younger girl sitting on the floor with her back against the wall, crying and sobbing. Emma approaches her cautiously. Unsure of what to do, she decides to sit down opposite the girl, offering silent company in an attempt to provide some comfort.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
And what was that?

EMMA
It was just a moment of doubt or something. Seeing myself in her. Which happened just a day before--

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - LIBRARY - DAY (MEMORY)

Emma, sixteen, is seated at a computer, surrounded by ten other students, each engrossed in their own screens in the school library. A MALE STUDENT among them suddenly reacts to something he sees on his screen..

MALE STUDENT
Oh my god. There’s a shooting.

Students quickly react.

FEMALE STUDENT
What? Where?

MALE STUDENT
At the Galleria!

MALE STUDENT 2
What?! What’s going on!?

MALE STUDENT
I don’t know, people are like jumping out of the windows and shit.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
There was a separate mass shooting?

EMMA
Yeah, I mean technically not a mass shooting, but yeah.

CHARLIE
What do you mean?

EMMA
Only three people died... It has to be four or more...

CHARLIE
Oh.. Ok, but it happened like around the same time?

EMMA
Yeah, exactly the same time. Like the day before I had planned to.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - CLASSROOM - DAY (MEMORY)

A TEACHER is giving a statement to the class. Emma notices an unoccupied desk.

TEACHER
At eleven thirty we'll gather in the recital hall. You'll be oriented about yesterday's events, then the principal is going to say some words on the tragedy...

Emma is confused about her feelings.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY (MEMORY)

There's a line to enter the recital hall, Emma is standing right next to classmates NATALIE and SALLY, who we saw bully Emma in an earlier scene.

SALLY
It's just so fucked up.

NATALIE
How could anyone do something like that?

She suddenly looks straight at Emma, including her in the conversation.

EMMA
Yeah, I know.. Really crazy.

SALLY
Why are people like that just out on the streets? Why wasn't he in a mental institution?

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - RECITAL HALL - DAY (MEMORY)

The PRINCIPAL is giving a speech to the whole school, filling the entire recital hall.

PRINCIPAL
..The best thing we can do in these kinds of situations is to be there for each other. To support each other. To listen to each other. So I want everyone to stand up and come up here in front of the stage.

All the students are getting up and gathering in front of the big open floor in front of the stage.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)
Everyone, just get up here. Don’t be afraid. Let’s all gather. And now, I want you to walk around, slowly, and try to look each other in the eye, to acknowledge each other, be aware of each other, feel for each other.

The students start slowly walking around, staring each other in the eye, some hugging and embracing, some crying. We see Emma and Sally look at each other. Sally hugs Emma. Emma starts crying, and she keeps crying as she rotates and repeats the process with other students, one by one.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - CLASSROOM - DAYS LATER (MEMORY)

The class is seated in a large circle in the classroom, each student facing one another. The atmosphere is heavy as they engage in a discussion about the recent tragedy.

TEACHER
Any other thoughts? Yes, Kira?

KIRA
I feel like this is specifically a male problem, right? It’s always like an angry crazy guy.

Emma shakes her head, the teacher notices.

TEACHER
Emma?

EMMA
Hm?

TEACHER
You don’t agree?

EMMA
No, I mean, there’s been a few.

TEACHER
A few what?

EMMA
Mass shootings. By women.

KIRA
Not in America?

EMMA
Yeah. There’s even that song, “I Don't Like Mondays”?

Kira shrugs.

EMMA (CONT'D)
From ‘79? About the woman who shot a bunch of people from her window and said it was because she hated Mondays? It’s not just men, and they’re not always crazy. A lot of them are shockingly normal.

JORDAN, a classmate, is surprised at Emma’s insight.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY (MEMORY)

Emma is on her way out, walking through the hallway, when Jordan stops her.

JORDAN
Emma!

EMMA
Oh hey.

JORDAN
I just wanted to say I thought you had some interesting points in there.

EMMA
Oh... Thanks.

JORDAN
Uhm, there's a few of us who are talking about organizing. To try to do something.

EMMA
About..?

JORDAN
Gun control. You should join us, if you want.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK (MEMORY)

Emma walks deep into the forest with a duffel bag. She stops, takes out a shovel, and starts digging. She buries her father's disassembled rifle, taking a long look before covering the hole.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - MEANWHILE (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
It's like that Louis Malle film.

EMMA
Which one?

CHARLIE
The one about the guy who wants to join the French resistance movement but is denied, so he joins the Nazis instead.

Emma looks at him a bit dumbfounded.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I mean, opposite way though.

EMMA
Right.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - THE GYM - EVENING (MEMORY)

Emma and fifteen other students are gathered in an unoccupied gym room discussing gun activism. Their makeshift logo is projected off a powerpoint onto a whiteboard. Emma seems eager and engaged. Then, Jordan announces something:

JORDAN
..And then lastly, we need to decide on a spokesperson.

ADRIAN
What about Emma?

EMMA
Me?

ADRIAN
Yeah. You always make good points, you're a good speaker. And you just happen to have the most sympathetic face out of any of us.

Emma smiles.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - THE GYM - LATER (MEMORY)

They are now playing four square after hours, laughing, bonding. Emma has finally found community.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAYS LATER (MEMORY)

Emma, surrounded by her group, is giving a passionate speech in the school courtyard, standing on the steps with a microphone in front of a big crowd of students.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - (PRESENT)

CHARLIE
What was going through your mind, You must have felt so conflicted?

EMMA
No, I was relieved... It was like escaping a cult, or like waking up from a bad dream.

CHARLIE
Really? Just like that?

EMMA
Yeah...

CHARLIE
And you never had those issues again?

EMMA
Like what, what do you mean?

CHARLIE
Like... Violent urges.

EMMA
No! Of course not!

CHARLIE
OK! I mean.. That’s good! So you genuinely changed.

EMMA
Yes... I did.

CHARLIE
And when did--

EMMA
Is it OK if we stop, actually?

CHARLIE
Oh, uhm...

EMMA
Till after the wedding at least? It’s just... It’s a very stressful week as it is.

They stare at each other. Emma starts crying.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I don’t want you to look at me differently, Charlie... I love you so much.

CHARLIE
I don’t. I swear. I’m just getting to know you better...

Charlie embraces Emma. They sit in it for a moment.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I love you too.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Charlie is brushing his teeth, while Emma is in the bedroom. He looks over at her as she undresses. We zoom in on Charlie again, as he visits another memory:

INT. CAR - DAY (CHARLIE’S MEMORY)

TWO YEARS AGO: Emma is driving on the highway with Charlie in the passenger seat. Someone cuts her off, triggering her.

EMMA
Wow! You fucking idiot!

She honks the horn.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Are you fucking kidding me? Jesus fucking christ, that was so close.

She keeps honking the horn. Charlie is clearly upset.

CHARLIE
Hey, hey.

EMMA
What the fuck was that?

CHARLIE
Yeah... Bad driver, let it go.

EMMA
With a fucking Monster Energy sticker? Is he a child?

She honks again, even more aggressively.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER (PRESENT)

They’re getting ready for bed, undressing and putting phones into chargers, then:

EMMA
Rachel’s not responding...

CHARLIE
It’s late.

EMMA
I texted her hours ago.

CHARLIE
Give her one day.

EMMA
Do you know how much responsibility she has?

CHARLIE
She’s not gonna ruin the wedding.

EMMA
She’s not responding on email either.

CHARLIE
Why are you emailing her?

EMMA
Because she’s supposed to help us market this book we’re publishing.

CHARLIE
I’ll talk to Mike.

EMMA
They probably both hate me.

CHARLIE
No, they don’t. It’s gonna be OK, I promise.

EMMA
How do you know?

CHARLIE
Rachel’s emotional. She does this all the time. You know how she is.

Charlie shuts the lights off. Long beat. Then:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You know, Freud said something like “the feelings you don’t talk about get buried alive, only to come back in uglier ways..”

EMMA
Is that what you feel right now?

CHARLIE
No, I’m just saying, it’s important to talk.

EMMA
Yeah.. And we did.

CHARLIE
We did.

EMMA
And we’re OK, right?

CHARLIE
Yeah...

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT (DREAM)

Emma and Charlie, dressed elegantly, are dining at an upscale restaurant. Suddenly, blood starts seeping from Emma's ear, trickling down her cheek and dripping onto her plate. Charlie notices first, his shock evident.

CHARLIE
Emma..

The blood flow intensifies, streaming onto Emma's dress and staining it. Emma tries her best to ignore it and keep eating, but the blood won't stop gushing out.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

The next morning Charlie's in the kitchen, clad in his boxers and t-shirt, making coffee. He opens the cupboard to grab a cup and ends up pulling out one with an illustration of a gun and a cheeky caption that reads: "Coffee or I'll shoot!" He tosses it in the trash and picks a different mug. Settling at the table, he opens his laptop to review his wedding speech on Google Docs, removing certain lines: "listens more deeply than anyone I know, despite having one good ear," "the kindest person I've ever met," and "Your empathy inspires me." Unsure what to do, he holds the backspace key down, deleting the whole speech word by word, until Emma, fresh from the shower, enters the room triggering him to shut the laptop.

CHARLIE
Good morning.

EMMA
Morning.

CHARLIE
You sleep OK?

EMMA
Not great. What are you doing?

CHARLIE
...I was just looking at my speech.

EMMA
Oh...

CHARLIE
I'm gonna shower then.

Charlie gets up and passes Emma.

EMMA
Hey.

Charlie stops and looks at her.

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
Kiss.

Charlie gives her a kiss, then goes to shower. Emma stares at the laptop. Should she open it? She almost does, but decides not to. She gathers vegetables and fruit from the fridge, along with a cutting board and a large knife. Just as she's about to throw something away, she spots the mug in the trash bin. Confused, she retrieves it. A wave of subdued shock passes through her as she looks at it, then she places it back in the trash. Tears start to form. For some reason, this seemingly small thing deeply upsets her. She walks away from the counter and sits down on chair, with the knife still in hand.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie, fresh out of the shower, is putting on socks then his wedding shoes.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie enters the room, clad only in his underwear and dress shoes. At first, he doesn't notice Emma, but when he does, he lets out a small scream, startled, as Emma is sitting behind him in a chair, zoned out, holding the big knife.

CHARLIE
What the fuck?

Emma is shocked by the reaction and looks down at the knife in her hand.

EMMA
Oh, I just.. Sorry, I just zoned out.

CHARLIE
You OK?

EMMA
I was making a smoothie and just thought about something.
(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)
(beat)
What?

CHARLIE
No, nothing.

EMMA
What? You thought I was gonna stab you?

CHARLIE
No, no.

EMMA
Then why are you looking at me like that?

CHARLIE
No, I just didn’t expect you to be there. I just reacted.
(beat)
You’re making a smoothie?

Emma feels wounded but tries to conceal it.

EMMA
Yeah...

CHARLIE
Can you make me one?

Emma nods and gets back to cutting. Charlie begins to pace around the kitchen, breaking in his shoes.

EMMA
What are you doing?

CHARLIE
I’m wearing them in. The guy told me to.

Charlie stomps around while nervously observing the knife in her hand. The rhythmic cutting of the vegetables and the squeak of the shoes all builds towards a violent climax that never comes.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

They are both sitting by the table, having the smoothies, him still in his underwear and the shoes, both of them trying to ignore the obvious.

CHARLIE
This is so good.

EMMA
Thank you.

CHARLIE
You use ginger?

EMMA
Yeah.

They enjoy their smoothies without talking for a while, then:

CHARLIE
Didn’t you say you had a friend who died?

EMMA
What?

CHARLIE
When you were young. Like a car accident or something?

EMMA
Oh, yeah.. My neighbor.

CHARLIE
Yeah, right. What was that? Were you close?

EMMA
I mean.. She was a year older.. We weren’t really that close.

CHARLIE
How old was she.. When it happened?

EMMA
Ten? Eleven maybe?

CHARLIE
Hm.. That must have been brutal to witness.. At that age.

EMMA
Well, I didn’t really witness it.

CHARLIE
No, but still.. Were you offered therapy or anything?

EMMA
No..

CHARLIE
So you never really processed it...

EMMA
Charlie, please--

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
I know what you're trying to say. It's not really relevant, it was years before we even moved.

CHARLIE
How do you know if it's relevant or not if you haven't even analyzed it.

EMMA
It had nothing to do with her.

CHARLIE
What makes you so sure?

EMMA
I just am.

CHARLIE
But that's the kind of thing people discover in therapy, these sort of hidden connections...

EMMA
I know you're very therapy-pilled, but we weren't that close, I don't need psychology to know that.

INT. MUSEUM / CHARLIE'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Charlie walks through the hallways of the museum where he works and sits down in his private office, flipping through the stack of mail on his desk. In the middle of the pile, he finds a photo book featuring a series of sexy female models holding guns in military outfits. Angrily, he grabs the book and storms out.

INT. MUSEUM - MISHA’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie leans into his colleague MISHA’s office holding the book.

CHARLIE
Misha? Did you put this on my desk?

He holds the book up.

MISHA
Uhm, no?

CHARLIE
Do you know who did?

MISHA
No. What is it?

CHARLIE
It’s a photo book.. Of women with guns?

MISHA
Who’s the artist?

He looks at the back of the book.

CHARLIE
“Anthea Cordova.”

MISHA
It didn’t just come in the mail?

CHARLIE
I don’t know.

They stare at each other for a beat, both confused, then Charlie leaves.

EXT. FOREST - DAY (MEMORY)

Sixteen-year-old Emma is in the forest, loading her rifle for practice, when a collared Husky dog suddenly emerges. The dog maintains a cautious distance but appears curious. Emma finishes loading the weapon and aims it at the dog. The memory is interrupted when...

INT. MISSION PUBLISHING - MEANWHILE

...Emma is startled by her colleague Alice touching her back while sitting by her desk, completely lost in thought.

ALICE
Sorry!

EMMA
No, it’s fine.

ALICE
Uhm, have you talked to Rachel?

EMMA
Oh.. Uhm.. No..

ALICE
OK. Would you mind nudging her? I haven’t heard anything.

Emma’s heart is racing.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Are you OK?

EMMA
Yeah.. Uhm, sorry what did you want?

ALICE
Just an update, I haven’t heard from her.

EMMA
Yeah. I know.. I think she’s busy.

ALICE
Doesn’t need to be right now.

EMMA
Right.. I mean, she’s always busy, they have so many clients.

ALICE
So what does that mean? She’s not gonna do it?

EMMA
Well, I mean, she told me she was struggling to find the time.. I guess I should have anticipated this.

ALICE
She was like so hyped to do it?

EMMA
Oh yeah, but that’s kind of how they are, you know.. Ad people..

ALICE
So do we ask for a new timeframe, or?

EMMA
She’s gonna tell you she has the time until she doesn’t. She’s great, don’t get me wrong, but she sucks at time management.

INT. MISSION PUBLISHING - LATER

Emma sits at her desk, casting nervous glances at Alice, who paces in small circles while on the phone. Suddenly, Alice stops and looks directly at Emma. Panicked, Emma quickly averts her gaze, fearing her bluff has been exposed. Her chest tightens, and she struggles to breathe, then:

ANDRES (O.S.)
“BANG!!!”

CUT TO -- CLOSE UP OF A SCREEN:

We see a TED TALK video where ANDRES, a forty five year old man is up on the stage talking to the crowd.

ANDRES
...That’s how fast I completely changed the course of my life. I was seventeen, and in a moment of confusion and rage, I committed an irreversible and unforgivable act: I killed my best friend.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The video is playing off of Charlie’s laptop standing on the dining table as the two of them watch.

EMMA
Why are you showing me this?

CHARLIE
It’s just such a cultural difference.

EMMA
What is?

CHARLIE
Like *teen anger* in this country.. My worst case would be smashing beer bottles behind the super market or something, you know?

Emma doesn’t bite.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
But I think people are sympathetic to that... The video has, what, nine million views? I couldn’t find one negative comment.

EMMA
This made you think of me?

CHARLIE
Well, I mean...

They tune back into the video for a moment:

ANDRES (O.C.)
...And I owe so much to my wife, because her acceptance truly made my life possible. But it was a gradual journey. Initially when I confided in her, the first thing that popped into her head was: “Could he kill again?”

Emma closes the laptop and walks away.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma and Charlie climb into bed, a noticeable tension hanging between them. Without a word, Emma begins to initiate sex. Charlie attempts to engage, but his mind is elsewhere, distracted. As Emma reaches into his boxers, she finds him soft. What usually comes easily for them now seems impossible. Charlie tries to get into it, gently squeezing Emma's breasts, but nothing is working.

EMMA
What’s wrong?

CHARLIE
Just... Give me a second...

They keep trying, but it’s not working.

EMMA
What?

Charlie hesitates, can’t bring himself to say anything.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Do you hate me?

CHARLIE
No! It’s just a stressful week.

EMMA
So you don’t want to have sex?

CHARLIE
No I do, I just...

EMMA
What?

He can’t bring himself to say anything.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Can you please just stop thinking about it!?

CHARLIE
You can’t just say “stop thinking about it”!

EMMA
But you *are* thinking about it?

CHARLIE
No, just give me a second!

EMMA
OK...

They sit there, now faced with the daunting task of forcing the mood under pressure.

EMMA (CONT'D)
It’s fine if you don’t want to. I just thought it could be--

CHARLIE
No.. Just give me a minute.

Charlie attempts to arouse himself while Emma watches. He reaches out, touching her gently between her legs. She enjoys it, closing her eyes and letting out soft moans. Despite her efforts, Charlie remains unresponsive. They give up.

EMMA
Let’s start over.

CHARLIE
What do you mean?

EMMA
Fresh start.

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Charlie settles onto the couch in the living room, clad only in his boxers and t-shirt. He waits there, the camera lingering on his face as he sits in anticipation, uncertain of what's to come. A minute passes before Emma enters the room in a t-shirt and sweatpants. She glances at him but then ignores him, heading to fetch a glass of water. He stares at her, slightly confused, as she approaches him with the water in hand.

EMMA
Is this seat taken?

CHARLIE
Uhm.. No.

EMMA
Mind if I sit?

CHARLIE
Go ahead.

She sits down and puts her glass of water on the table.

EMMA
Do you live around here?

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
Feel like I’ve seen you before..

CHARLIE
Right.. Yeah, I live.. Near.

EMMA
I’m Emma by the way..

She puts her hand forward.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What’s your name?

Charlie isn’t feeling the role-play and doesn’t grab her hand.

CHARLIE
Emma, I don’t know if this is--

EMMA
Sorry, what’s your name?

Beat.

CHARLIE
Charlie...

EMMA
Ok, nice to meet you. What are you doing out so late?

Charlie is not willing to continue.

CHARLIE
Emma...

EMMA
What?

CHARLIE
This isn’t gonna work.

EMMA
What’s not gonna work?

Emma stays in character, but we can feel her desperation, tears are starting to build.

CHARLIE
Let’s not do this.

EMMA
Do what?

CHARLIE
Stop!

Feeling a pang of defeat, Emma steps out of the role-play and remains silent for a beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Please don’t read into this, you’re being paranoid. I don’t care about your past, that’s not what this is about.

Long beat.

EMMA
Then why did you throw out the mug?

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
The one with the gun on it.

CHARLIE
Oh... I did?

EMMA
Yes!

CHARLIE
I don’t know, maybe it was broken?

EMMA
No it wasn’t..

CHARLIE
Ok, I made a mistake then.

EMMA
Why are you lying?

CHARLIE
OK! Sorry I threw it out! Didn’t know it was such a precious mug!

EMMA
It’s obviously not about the mug!

They just stare at each other for a moment, we can feel the tension between them. Charlie gets an idea, but he takes a second to plan his move. Slowly, he gets up, extending his arms. She looks puzzled for an instant before he swiftly tugs her sweatpants down to her ankles, which she wasn’t prepared for, and when he stands back up he accidentally smashes the back of his head into her face.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Ow!

CHARLIE
Oh shit!

She pulls her pants up, then holds her face, her mouth feeling sore.

EMMA
What the fuck was that?

CHARLIE
I was just trying to break the ice!
I’m sorry!

At that moment...

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MEANWHILE

...Emma's phone, connected to the charger and resting on the bedside table, suddenly lights up and emits the sound of a new text message. It's a message from Rachel. The camera remains focused on the phone as Emma and Charlie re-enter the bedroom, her rushing to the bathroom to rinse her mouth.

CHARLIE
Are you OK? Did I hurt you?

EMMA
It’s fine.

CHARLIE
You’re not bleeding right?

EMMA
No, it’s just stings.

Emma walks back in and then reaches for her phone to check the message.

EMMA (CONT'D)
You gotta be kidding.

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
Rachel’s not coming to the wedding.

INT. ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

We see several observational shots of urban creative millennials working at Rachel’s overly corporate-trendy, WeWork-style advertising office, before we land on Charlie, Mike and Rachel seated in a conference room enclosed in a glass cubicle.

RACHEL
So do you know why she had me fired?

CHARLIE
I really doubt she had anything to do with that.

RACHEL
Why?

CHARLIE
Because she wouldn't do that, she's not like that.

RACHEL
Do we really know her at all though?

CHARLIE
She was sixteen, Rachel.

RACHEL
So you're just fine with all of this? You've moved on, you're over it?

CHARLIE
I mean, yeah.

RACHEL
How can that be true?

CHARLIE
Because we've talked, and I feel like I understand where she was coming from. And I find it a bit odd that you, of all people, can't do that.

RACHEL
Me? What do you mean?

CHARLIE
Yeah, locking a disabled kid in a closet, you don't think that's kind of a fucked up thing to do?

MIKE
OK, let's not--

RACHEL
I didn't say he was disabled?

CHARLIE
"Slow." You called him slow.

MIKE
Please, let’s not fight guys.

CHARLIE
It’s pretty hypocritical.

RACHEL
It was an impulse, Charlie. I didn’t plan cold blooded murder.

CHARLIE
I think that’s more common than you think.

RACHEL
What’s more common?

CHARLIE
Emma’s story. Considering how many mass shootings we have in this country.

RACHEL
Are you kidding me?

CHARLIE
No, it happens all the time, right? And for each one there has to be way more close calls, you know, people who backed out, or changed their minds for whatever reason. You got to multiply that number by ten, at least, if not more.

RACHEL
OK?

CHARLIE
Yeah, so just imagine how many people are in Emma’s position. Who are they? It could be anyone. We just don’t know.

Through the glass walls, they look at Rachel's advertising colleagues, all exuding a sort of disarming millennial tweeness as they go about their business.

RACHEL
But so what?

CHARLIE
So she’s not some uniquely evil monster, it’s more like a socially constructed, cultural thing.

RACHEL
Oh, it’s America’s fault now?

CHARLIE
Partially, yeah. Maybe that’s easier for me to see who’s not from here.

RACHEL
Oh, please. Mike grew up around guns and look at him, he’s scared of them.

MIKE
I’m not *scared*.

CHARLIE
Well, you also might not know that Emma went through some really hard stuff growing up.

RACHEL
Like what?

CHARLIE
I mean, I kind of promised not to tell, but she experienced someone really close to her dying, when she was young.

MIKE
Who?

CHARLIE
Her neighbor, who she was really close with. She died in a brutal car accident. She basically saw her best friend getting crushed to death, at like twelve years.

MIKE
Oh, wow.

CHARLIE
And she wasn’t offered any type of support, or therapy, just had to carry that around, all alone.

Mike looks over at Rachel to see if this changes her tone.

MIKE
I mean, that’s... That’s kind of a big deal.

Rachel is hit with a little bit of sympathy.

RACHEL
Well, I'm sorry she had to go through that, obviously.

CHARLIE
Yeah... She hasn't had it easy. She's been through a lot, it's kind of interesting in a way.

RACHEL
What's interesting?

CHARLIE
That she has this whole backstory. It's so unexpected, it kind of makes her, I don't know, yeah, interesting, I guess.

RACHEL
"Interesting"?! Really?

MIKE
I think what he's trying to say is that--

RACHEL
(to Mike)
I wasn't talking to you.

CHARLIE
I'm saying: because it's *so not* who she is today. Like, a really good person came out of all of this.

RACHEL
It's not "interesting"! It's awful, Charlie! It's disgusting!

A twenty-two-year-old FEMALE ASSISTANT knocks on the door and peeks in and talks to Rachel.

FEMALE ASSISTANT
Hi. Sorry to interrupt. Would you be able to just approve that Oatly deck real quick?

RACHEL
Oh I thought I did?

FEMALE ASSISTANT
No.

RACHEL
Just tell them it’s fine.

FEMALE ASSISTANT
They said they need to hear it from you.

Rachel sighs, then gets up to leave.

RACHEL
Be right back.

Rachel leaves the room, leaving Charlie and Mike alone.

CHARLIE
Why are we doing this *here*?

MIKE
I don’t know, she had a busy day or something.

CHARLIE
And we don’t?

A beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's kind of funny how she's so self-righteous while working in advertising. It just seems... I don't know...

Mike avoids getting involved.

MIKE
When’s your family getting in?

CHARLIE
On Friday.

MIKE
Cool. That’s exciting.

CHARLIE
Yeah...

Beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Are we good by the way?

MIKE
What?

CHARLIE
We're good right?

MIKE
Yeah. I mean... Yes.

CHARLIE
No?

MIKE
Well.

CHARLIE
Cause we all shared stories. You too.

Rachel comes back inside and closes the door.

RACHEL
Ok, I'm sorry, we're gonna have to wrap this up, I have a lunch soon.

CHARLIE
Ok, Rachel, listen. We'd obviously be devastated if you guys didn't come to the wedding. We really want you both there. Emma especially. She's feeling really awful already and this would just completely crush her.

Mike nods and looks at Rachel.

MIKE
Yeah... I get it. Maybe it's.. You know, I feel that.

RACHEL
You gotta understand that I'm conflicted, it'll feel like a betrayal to Sam.

CHARLIE
Rachel, I'm begging you. Please just come. At least just to show face. You don't even have to enjoy it. We just really want you there.

A beat, Rachel takes a deep breath.

RACHEL
I'm gonna have to talk to Sam first.

CHARLIE
Why would you bring her into this?

RACHEL
Because I need to know if she's OK.

CHARLIE
If she's OK with you going to our wedding?

RACHEL
Yes.

CHARLIE
How close even are you guys? Where does she live?

RACHEL
Not too far from here actually.

CHARLIE
And you just don't see her that much, or?

RACHEL
No, I do.

CHARLIE
So why have I never heard of her?

RACHEL
I've talked about her before! I remember telling you about how we used to ride horses.

CHARLIE
OK?
(to Mike)
Have you met her?

MIKE
I mean... Yeah...

RACHEL
I see her all the time, we're very close. She's on her way now in fact.

CHARLIE
You're seeing her *now*?

RACHEL
Yeah, that's who I'm meeting for lunch.

CHARLIE
OK? Can I talk to her?

RACHEL
No.

EXT. ADVERTISING AGENCY - LATER

Charlie leaves the ad agency and walks up the street alone. He stops at a streetlight and sees SAM, a beautiful thirty-three-year-old woman in a wheelchair, across the street, waiting for the light. He doesn't know her face, but he's certain it must be her. The walk signal turns green, but he freezes, unsure of what to do. Sam gets closer and closer until she rolls right past him. At that moment, Charlie decides to follow her. Sam remains completely unaware she's being followed, the tension building into suspense, until Charlie finally blurts out:

CHARLIE
Sam?

Sam halts, Charlie moves towards her.

SAM
Yes?

CHARLIE
Are you Rachel’s cousin?

SAM
I am, yeah..?

CHARLIE
Hi, I’m Charlie, I’m friends of Rachel... and Mike.

SAM
Oh. Cool.

CHARLIE
(forcing it)
I love your jacket by the way!

SAM
Thank you. It’s just Uniqlo.

CHARLIE
But it’s great. It looks so comfy.

SAM
Thank you.
(confused)
Did she tell you I was coming, or?

CHARLIE
Oh yeah, she did. I just saw her.

SAM
Oh, OK. Uhm...

CHARLIE
So, you guys close, or?

SAM
Uhm... I mean, she's family, so...

CHARLIE
So...?

SAM
What was your name again?

CHARLIE
Charlie...

SAM
Right. Great to meet you Charlie.

CHARLIE
So nice to meet you Sam. We should all hang soon.

SAM
Yeah..

CHARLIE
Tell Rachel I said hi.

SAM
OK. Bye.

Sam rolls away, Charlie is left feeling guilty and dirty.

INT. MUSEUM - CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie is in his private office, flipping through the art book of military girls holding guns once more. This time, he lingers over each page, almost trying to convince himself to enjoy it. As he turns the pages, he suddenly lands on a provocative image of Emma holding a rifle, a vivid fantasy overtaking his thoughts. *Is he supposed to hate it or like it?*

INT. MUSEUM - LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Charlie and his colleague Misha are both seated at a big table eating their lunches in the private common area at the museum. She's engrossed in her phone, he's barely eating.

CHARLIE
Misha?

MISHA
Hm?

CHARLIE
What's the worst thing you've ever done?

Misha puts her phone down and thinks for a few seconds.

MISHA
Mmmm... Cheated.

CHARLIE
Really?

MISHA
Yeah.

CHARLIE
Who did you cheat on?

MISHA
My ex. I had an affair actually. It was really bad.

CHARLIE
When was this?

MISHA
Like, five years ago?

CHARLIE
What made you do it, you think?

MISHA
I don't know. My boyfriend at the time was really nice, like a really good guy... I just stopped being attracted to him or something.

CHARLIE
Because he was too nice?

MISHA
I don’t know... Maybe. I started seeing this married guy who notoriously cheated and treated me like shit, so...

CHARLIE
And you liked that?

MISHA
Well something compelled me? But I felt so guilty I broke up with my boyfriend. And then the married guy dumped me. So... Got what I deserved I guess.

CHARLIE
Wow, interesting...

MISHA
How about you?

CHARLIE
Uhm... I beat a guy up. Really badly.

MISHA
Really? What guy?

CHARLIE
Just a random person at a party... Broke his nose... And his arm...

MISHA
Why?

CHARLIE
I just.. Snapped.

Misha stares at him inquisitively.

MISHA
You’re lying.

CHARLIE
Yeah...

MISHA
Idiot...

Misha shifts her attention back to her phone.

CHARLIE
What would you do if your boyfriend told you he planned a school shooting when he was young...? Like, he didn't end up actually doing it, but he got really close, had a weapon and everything, but changed his mind last minute.

MISHA
Like if Blake did that?

CHARLIE
Yeah...

MISHA
I mean, that would just, I don't know. That would scare me obviously.

CHARLIE
Yeah... But, would it change how you feel about him?

MISHA
Well, why *didn't* he do it?

CHARLIE
Because... His car broke down that day, and he just decided not to.

MISHA
But otherwise he would have just done it, that's what you're saying?

CHARLIE
I mean, maybe. We can't really know, but the point is he *didn't*.

MISHA
Okay... Yeah I think I'd call the police.

CHARLIE
You'd call the police?

MISHA
Yeah, right? I think so?

CHARLIE
But obviously he's changed, he's not that person anymore.

MISHA
Yeah, but the fact that he ever *was*...

CHARLIE
But you love him.

MISHA
Sure, the person I *thought* I knew.

CHARLIE
(annoyed)
All right, so you call the police... What are they supposed to do? Arrest him? For what?

MISHA
I don't know, aren't you supposed to do that if you think someone could be a threat?

CHARLIE
But he was sixteen! Or, like, in high school..

MISHA
Yeah, but still, that's a huge red flag.

CHARLIE
Yeah but you've been dating him for what, two years?

MISHA
Three.

CHARLIE
Three years... You don't think you know him well enough?

MISHA
Yeah, but you've met Blake: he would like murder me so easily.

CHARLIE
What if he was really open and honest with you and made you really believe he's a changed man?

MISHA
(joking)
Ok, I mean, isn't that exactly what a psychopath would do?

Charlie punches the table hard, startling Misha, then he runs off to his office, leaving her puzzled.

INT. MUSEUM - CHARLIE'S OFFICE - LATER

Charlie is pacing around holding back his tears when Misha knocks, then opens the door.

MISHA
Hey... What’s wrong?

Charlie looks sad, he’s about to cry. She enters and closes the door behind her.

MISHA (CONT'D)
Was it something I said?

CHARLIE
It’s just the wedding, I’ve just been a mess. I’m sorry.

Tears starts rolling. She touches his hand, he opens for an embrace, she hugs him. He suddenly forcibly kisses her, and she kisses him back. They make out, Charlie’s hands now all over her, hers on their way down his pants. Suddenly Charlie regrets it and stops.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Let’s not...

MISHA
You’re right.

CHARLIE
I don’t know why I just did that.

MISHA
It’s OK.

CHARLIE
No, I’m sorry, that’s not OK, what the fuck is wrong with me?

MISHA
It’s fine. We were just... confused.

CHARLIE
Can we forget this ever happened?

MISHA
Yes. Of course. It didn’t happen.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - THE NEXT DAY

Emma and Charlie have returned to the wedding venue for final adjustments and are making amends with Imogene following the mishap at the tasting.

EMMA
I am so sorry about last time!

IMOGENE
Oh no, don't worry, I hope it wasn't the food?

EMMA
No. It was just the alcohol, I hadn't eaten all day. Lesson learned.

IMOGENE
Well, good to get it out of the way before the wedding I guess!

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - LATER

All the tables have now been placed. Charlie and Emma are trying to make final seating arrangements, shuffling placards around.

EMMA
So Rachel's definitely coming?

CHARLIE
Yeah, that's the latest.

EMMA
So do we put them back here?

CHARLIE
How about here?

EMMA
That's where we have Misha.

CHARLIE
Yeah, but... I don't know how I feel about her boyfriend. Maybe good with some distance.

Emma eyes him with a hint of suspicion, but he remains nonchalant.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - LATER

Emma and Charlie are watching PAULINE, the wedding DJ, as she goes through the media cabinet, trying to see if the equipment is up to her standard. She plays a track off her phone to test the speakers.

CHARLIE
Does it seem OK?

PAULINE
I'm gonna replace the cables. But other than that it's fine.

EMMA
What's this track your playing?

PAULINE
Oh. It's mine actually.

EMMA
Really? You make music?

PAULINE
It's old, but yeah. I was at Ed Banger?

CHARLIE
What's that again?

PAULINE
The label? Justice, Mr Oizo?

CHARLIE
Oh yeah, I know Justice...

EMMA
Wow. That's so cool.

CHARLIE
Do you still make music?

PAULINE
No... Not really.

EMMA
Why not?

PAULINE
Just... Life had different plans I guess.

Emma bursts into tears, confusing Pauline who turns off her music.

EMMA
Sorry... I’m just... Emotional.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - LATER

Charlie, Emma and Pauline are seated in the foyer, discussing the set-list.

CHARLIE
And here’s a list of things we absolutely don’t want to hear.

Charlie hands Pauline the print. She studies it.

PAULINE
Rod Stewart?

CHARLIE
My mom is gonna ask. Just say you don’t have it.

EMMA
And then we need to talk about something else...

PAULINE
OK?

EMMA
We saw you... The other day. On the street.

PAULINE
Really? Where?

EMMA
Maple Grove.

PAULINE
Yeah?

CHARLIE
You were with a friend, smoking something.

PAULINE
Smoking? OK?

EMMA
Heroin... You guys were smoking heroin.

PAULINE
No. I don’t do that.

EMMA
It’s OK. We’re not here to judge.

CHARLIE
Yeah, you’re not in trouble, we just wanted to make sure you’re OK.

PAULINE
OK? Like, what... I don’t--What do you want?

EMMA
Nothing, relax. What you do on your own time is none of our business, we don’t care about that, we just want to make sure you’re OK, and that you’ll be able to do a good job.

CHARLIE
It’s a very important day for us. Our parents are meeting for the first time, there’s just a lot at stake.

EMMA
Yeah, I mean, it’s the biggest night of our lives.

PAULINE
Well, I don’t know, I don’t do drugs.

Emma and Charlie look at each other, this is not going the way they hoped.

CHARLIE
Look, we’ve all done drugs. We’re not criticizing you. Life’s tough, we get it, you wanted to unwind.

PAULINE
I didn’t fucking do it!

CHARLIE
Ok, you don’t have to yell, we’re being nice here.

PAULINE
No, you’re accusing me!

EMMA
You don't have to worry, we're not firing you, we just don't want you to be high when you're working.

CHARLIE
Unless, of course, that's something you need to function, then, you know, maybe you do just like a small amount.

EMMA
Yeah, it's not the heroin itself, we just don't want you to be visibly high. As said, like, all our friends and family are gonna be here.

CHARLIE
But I mean we could potentially find a spot for you to do it, if it's about managing your stress or whatever.

EMMA
Yeah. Not inside though, the sprinklers.

CHARLIE
Yeah, maybe we should ask Imogene if there's--

EMMA
Let's not bring her into it.

CHARLIE
No, of course.

They look at Pauline, who's already tired of the conversation.

PAULINE
I'll do a good job, OK?

EMMA
Yeah... But, can you admit that we saw you?

PAULINE
No, I don't know what you saw.

EMMA
We've told you exactly what we saw. Why are you denying it?

PAULINE
Why do you care?

EMMA
Because it’s our wedding!

PAULINE
I don’t know what else to say. I didn’t do it. Can I please just do my job?

EMMA
No.

CHARLIE
Yes. You can, but we just want to--

EMMA
(to Charlie)
No! I want her to be honest!
(to Pauline)
We saw you smoking something. Either heroin or fentanyl.
(then to Charlie)
Right?

CHARLIE
...Yeah, I mean, that’s what we feel we saw.

EMMA
Just admit it so we can move on. You’re not in trouble.

They stare at each other.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Just fucking admit it!

CHARLIE
Or maybe we made a mistake..

EMMA
What?

CHARLIE
(whispers)
Maybe it wasn’t her...? It was dark and--

EMMA
No. I know what I saw.

PAULINE
Can I be honest..?

EMMA
Yes, that’s all we want.

PAULINE
You’re being a fucking cunt.

EMMA
Ok. You can leave, you’re fired.
Get out. Yeah, get the fuck out!

Pauline gets up, walks out the doors and slams it as hard as she can.

CHARLIE
Was that really necessary?

EMMA
Yes, what are you talking about?
She called me a cunt.

CHARLIE
Yeah because we kept pushing her.

EMMA
I don’t even care about the heroin anymore, the lying is the problem!

They stare at each other for a beat, then:

CHARLIE
OK, so what do we do? Go on craigslist?

EXT. WEDDING VENUE - DAYS LATER

It’s the wedding day! They’re getting officiated at the venue, surrounded by all their friends and family. The air is thick with emotions as they gaze into each other’s eyes. Him in his sharp tuxedo, her in a stunning dress.

CHARLIE
I do.

They kiss, sealing their vows.

THEN:

Emma joyfully tosses her bouquet over her head on the lawn. She is surrounded by a large, eager crowd of girls and women, all hoping to catch it.

Amidst the cheers and clapping, a sixteen-year-old girl named CASSANDRA, who resembles a young Emma, catches it. Emma and Cassandra share a brief, meaningful glance.

THEN:

Emma and Charlie pose for photos taken by Frances.

FRANCES
Remember what we talked about: express those feelings. The love!

Emma and Charlie are smiling, laughing, joking around, kissing, all for the cameras.

FRANCES (CONT'D)
Great! Can we get the parents in too?

Emma turns around and signals to SARAH and ROGER, her mom and dad, to come stand beside her. Charlie does the same with his parents ALAN and JILL.

EMMA
Mom! Dad!

CHARLIE
Hey guys, come over!

The parents gather beside their children, beaming with pride and joy, as Frances continues snapping photos. Emma's parents exude a warm and friendly aura, in contrast to Charlie's parents, who appear somewhat reserved. As they pose, Charlie catches a glimpse of Misha and her boyfriend BLAKE, a chiseled bro, entering the venue. Emma looks over her shoulder and catches sight of Rachel and Mike who are helping to guide the guests the dining hall. Frances redirects their focus.

FRANCES
Emma, Charlie! Big smiles!

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - LATER

Tables are spread out in the big dining hall, guests have taken their seats, there’s chatter, laughter and energy in the room, then Mike stands up, clinking his glass.

MIKE
Hello everyone! I just wanted to welcome everyone, and thank you all for being here on this special day.
(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)
I think we should start with a toast for the bride and groom.

Everyone gets up and raises their glasses. Charlie looks at Emma, radiating with pride.

MIKE (CONT'D)
To Emma and Charlie!

The whole room cheers, "To Emma and Charlie!" and everyone takes a sip. Over at a smaller table on the side, Rachel, seated alone with Mike, knocks back the rest of her drink. Everyone digs into their meal, kicking things off on a high note. Emma and Charlie's families are getting chatty, hitting it off. Then Mike signals for Charlie to come to the foyer.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - MAIN ENTRANCE

IVAN, a forty-five-year-old DJ shows up with equipment in a tote bag. Mike and Charlie greet him.

MIKE
Thank you for making it so last minute.

IVAN
No worries. Are you Charlie?

MIKE
This is Charlie.

CHARLIE
Hi.

IVAN
Congrats. I’m Ivan.. “DJ Shufflepuff” Where do I set up?

CHARLIE
It’s in there, but we’re doing dinner now.

IVAN
Gotcha, I won’t disturb.

CHARLIE
What are you gonna play from?

IVAN
My laptop.

He holds up an IBM laptop that looks two decades old. Then, Blake passes by on his way to the bathroom and pauses to greet Charlie.

BLAKE
Hey. Congrats man.

He takes Charlies hand.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
I’m Blake. Misha’s boyfriend.

CHARLIE
Of course, yeah. Thanks for coming.

BLAKE
I tried to say hi earlier, but...

CHARLIE
Oh yeah. Sorry. Busy day!

BLAKE
Of course. Enjoy it man.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - LATER

Misha rises and walks past Rachel, and they exchange a few words, which catches Emma's attention. Then, as Misha walks past Emma, she completely ignores her, leaving Emma even more puzzled. Shortly after, Charlie and Mike return to their seats, and Charlie plants a kiss on Emma, pulling her out of her spiraling thoughts. As everyone delves deeper into the second course, Mike stands once again to introduce the next speaker.

MIKE
Everyone, it’s now time to hear a few words from the father of the bride.

Roger stands up and nervously smiles at Emma, who smiles back, already on the verge of tears.

ROGER
Emma, my girl, you're looking absolutely stunning today. Time has flown by way too fast, hasn't it? It feels like you moved out three days ago, but here you are getting married.

Chuckles from the crowd.

ROGER (CONT'D)
You’ve always been a creative and passionate girl. I don’t know if you remember, but when you were young, you had all these characters you’d come up with, and you put on these little shows for your mom and I, using the living room as a stage. I think the “blind farmer” was my favorite: You’d stumble around bumping into furniture, yelling, “Has anyone seen a brown cow?”

Laughter fills the room as Emma, despite her embarrassment, can't help but smile. Both she and Charlie are caught up in the moment, genuinely enjoying the speech.

ROGER (CONT'D)
In middle school, you had a brief affair with theater. You were really into drama. No more blind farmers, it had to be serious, preferably life or death.

This moment in the speech is slightly triggering for Charlie and Emma.

ROGER (CONT'D)
However, as a teenager, your focus shifted towards activism. You developed a strong passion for gun control, which you got so serious about I once had to pick you up from the police station. They told me you and your friends had been caught egging Walmart employees for selling weapons.

Rachel bursts out laughing, catching everyone's attention with their puzzled looks for a moment, making Emma feel uncomfortable, before Roger goes on.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Uh... It was clear it came from your big heart, though I've got to admit, I think part of it was about trying to push your dad's buttons. Because around this time my hunting rifle just vanished out of thin air, never to return. I still don’t believe that was a complete coincidence.

Suddenly, really loud noises that sound like gun shots echo through the room, shocking everyone, some even starting to duck under their table.

IVAN
Sorry!

Ivan stands up from behind the media cabinet, where he was trying to connect his laptop, creating static noise from the speakers.

IVAN (CONT'D)
I’m turning it off. So sorry. Cheers everyone!

The crowd starts laughing, realizing it was just a technical fluke.

ROGER
That was not planned, believe it or not.

Another round of laughter.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Uhm... Kind of lost my train of thoughts there. But Emma, your passion really shines through in everything you do, whether it's your work, or your love. You're all about passion, and you deserve someone who can match that passion... And from what I’ve been seeing, I think Charlie might just be that guy. Cheers everyone!

Emma sheds a tear. As they cheers, Rachel gets up from her table, wobbling a bit already, seemingly drunk, and sits down at an empty seat next to Alice. Emma notices this which instantly makes her feel uneasy.

CHARLIE
(to Roger)
You really just kept guns around the house?

ROGER
What?

Emma turns over to Charlie.

EMMA
(whispering to Charlie)
Don’t.

CHARLIE
Nothing... Great speech! Really sweet!

Frances approaches, snapping photos of everyone at the table, everyone being forced to smile. Then, Mike stands up again to present another speaker.

MIKE
Hi everyone! It’s time to hear a few words from the maid of honor, who also happens to be my wife: Rachel!

Almost reluctantly, Rachel gets up to speak, already a bit drunk.

RACHEL
Uhm... I got to know Emma through Charlie, who’s Mike’s best friend from college, and, uhm... When I was asked to be her maid of honor, I was actually a bit surprised. We haven’t known each other that long, but I was flattered and said yes immediately. And through this process, I’ve gotten to know Emma more intimately and... She’s full of surprises! She’s layered and complex. I really hope she finds happiness and love through this marriage. You’ve got a very open and caring partner in Charlie, a real cheerleader, so uhm...

She looks down at Mike seems impatient.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Mike’s already looking at me like I should wrap this up. I guess we’re on a tight schedule here so... Uhm... Yeah, I mean, you guys are really good for each other! I wish you both the best of luck! Cheers to the happy couple!

The guests all applaud, but the speech really doesn’t go over well with Emma, who immediately excuses herself to go to the bathroom.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma stands in front of the bathroom mirror, giving herself a mental check. She touches up her makeup and takes a moment to calm herself. Outside, a line forms, with chatter growing louder. Curious, Emma presses her ear against the door, straining to make out the muffled voices. She catches a snippet of conversation that unsettles her, a voice saying “school shooting” then “don’t tell anyone.” Startled, she steps back from the door, a wave of anxiety washing over her. She takes deep, steadying breaths to ease the tightness in her chest. Composing herself, she finally opens the door to see...

INT. WEDDING VENUE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

...Misha visibly startled by the sight of Emma.

MISHA
(nervous)
Emma!

EMMA
Did I scare you?

MISHA
No! Congrats! You look so beautiful.

EMMA
Thank you..
(a beat)
Who were you just talking to?

MISHA
Just now?

EMMA
Yeah.

MISHA
Susan..?

EMMA
What did you talk about?

MISHA
Sorry?

They stare at each other, Emma blocking the bathroom entrance.

EMMA
I thought I overheard something.

MISHA
(scared)
No, it was nothing.

Emma stares at her.

MISHA (CONT'D)
Just maybe about the food or something?
(a beat)
Can I... Do you mind?

Emma steps aside, letting her go in.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - EMPTY SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma roams alone in search of liquor and eventually discovers a cabinet in one of the empty rooms. She takes a big swig directly from a bottle before putting it back. Cycling through various states of panic, she eventually steadies herself and returns to the dining hall.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Emma sits beside Charlie, attempting to act normal but feels paranoid, worried she’s the subject of gossip. She notices conversations around her, interpreting gestures and glances as suspicious. She leans over to Charlie.

EMMA
(whispers)
What’s with Misha?

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
(whispers)
Did you tell her?

CHARLIE
(whispers)
Tell her what?

EMMA
(whispers)
You know...

CHARLIE
(whispers)
No! Of course not.

EMMA
(whispers)
She’s acting so strange.

Jill notices the whispering.

JILL
What are you two love birds whispering about?

Charlie immediately puts on a smile.

CHARLIE
Nothing. How’s the food mom?

As Jill and Charlie chat, Emma spots Rachel walking around talking to people she doesn’t know. This ramps her paranoia even further.

EMMA
(to Charlie)
Would you come with me for a second?

INT. WEDDING VENUE - EMPTY SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CHARLIE
What’s going on?

EMMA
I think Rachel’s talking.

CHARLIE
Why do you say that?

EMMA
I overheard Misha talking about it.

CHARLIE
Like what? What did she say?

EMMA
She was standing in line with Susan and she said something about school shooting, and “don’t tell anyone.”

CHARLIE
Really? Are you sure?

EMMA
Yes!

CHARLIE
So you think Rachel told her?

EMMA
Yes, it has to be, or she told someone who told Misha, I don’t know. I don’t fucking know Charlie!

CHARLIE
Hey, hey...

EMMA
If Misha knows then who else? Mom and dad are probably gonna hear it soon, your parents! Oh my god. Charlie, I’m freaking out.

CHARLIE
Emma, breathe. It’s gonna be fine.

EMMA
You promise you didn’t say anything?

CHARLIE
I swear to god.

EMMA
Can you go get her?

CHARLIE
Get who?

EMMA
Misha. I want to talk to her.

CHARLIE
No, let’s not make it a whole thing.

EMMA
I need to know who told her.

CHARLIE
Is it gonna make a difference?

EMMA
Yes, Charlie, so I can figure out what to do!

Charlie stares at Emma for a while, he doesn’t want to move.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Fine, I'll get her.

CHARLIE
No, Emma!

She rushes past him, leaving him standing in the room, visibly stressed. But before he can formulate a plan, Emma returns with Misha, who looks scared and confused. Emma shuts the door and faces them both. They exchange anxious glances for a brief moment, then:

MISHA
Can I just say: he kissed *me*. And we stopped immediately, it was truly nothing.

EMMA
What?!

CHARLIE
Oh my god...

EMMA
What do you mean?

MISHA
Like, he wasn't himself, he seemed disturbed, he was crying and I tried to comfort him...

EMMA
Why was he crying?

MISHA
I don't know, he asked me how I'd feel if--

CHARLIE
I just hit a wall, I was just really emotional.

EMMA
(to Misha)
What were you gonna say?

MISHA
He asked me what I would do if Blake told me he'd been involved in a school shooting or something.

CHARLIE
Planned.

MISHA
Yeah or planned one. And then he got upset, and that’s why I tried to comfort him, which he clearly misread.

EMMA
(to Charlie)
Why the fuck did you kiss her?

MISHA.
Wait, I’m confused..

EMMA
*You’re* confused?

CHARLIE
(to Emma)
It was nothing, it was a complete accident.

MISHA
Is the shooting thing real?

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DINING HALL - MEANWHILE

Charlie and Emma's seats are noticeably empty, causing murmurs of confusion among the guests as the room buzzes with whispers. At the back, Misha emerges, visibly distressed, sitting back down next to Blake. Just then, Charlie and Emma appear, donning their best "happy couple" faces. The room falls silent as they sit back down. Their parents both check in if everything's all right, and they both just nod and pretend. Then Mike rises up while clinking his glass again.

MIKE
Dear guests, the moment has arrived for the bride to say a few words to the groom!

Emma shakes her head to signal that she’s not gonna do the speech.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Uhm, or actually... I think the groom is gonna go first...

Charlie is caught by surprise, full of nerves and adrenaline.

CHARLIE
OK...

He stands up and looks at Emma, then at the room, then back at Emma.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Uh... Emma.. The love of my life... You look so beautiful today... Uhm...

His voice is already shaking.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Wow... Didn't know this was gonna be so hard... I give speeches all the time, it's kind of my job.

He looks around the room, everyone smiles and waits for him to continue.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Uhm... You know... In the beginning, I was really afraid of being vulnerable in front of you, you know? And, uhm... whenever I had something big I wanted to tell you, I would practice it first... By whispering into your ear, your deaf ear... As a dry run I guess, and... You don't even know this, but I actually proposed to you many times... I got, just a little bit better every time, and, uhm....

Charlie's shaking, his voice is trembling.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm realizing... I should have practiced this speech too... Uhm... I love you so much Emma...

He completely freezes, unable to speak another word. A bodily reaction simply prevents him from continuing. The guests look puzzled. After a moment, Mike walks over to check on Charlie, whispering to him.

MIKE
You OK?

Charlie can't even respond, shaking his head. Mike quickly realizes he has to cover for him.

MIKE (CONT'D)
I think that's it for the groom! It's an emotional day guys! Cheers!

The guests raise their glasses. Jill tries to console Charlie as he sits back down, while Emma feels a swirl of uncertainty. As she scans the room, she notices Misha whispering with Blake, which adds to her unease.

THEN:

The cake is rolled into the dining hall, and Mike hands a knife to the couple. Charlie grips it, ready to cut the cake with Emma, but hesitates, feeling an unexpected discomfort as if sensing something bad. Without waiting for Charlie, Emma firmly grips the knife and begins to slice the cake herself. Amidst this tense moment, the chatter between Blake and Misha intensifies, drawing the guests' attention. However, Charlie and Emma push through. Frances starts snapping photos, redirecting focus back to the ceremonious cake cutting. Emma and Charlie feed each other, performing for the whole room, while so much remains unsaid.

THEN:

It’s time for the first dance. A space has been cleared at the end of the room near the DJ, and guests stand ready with their phones to capture the moment. Ivan puts on their song, the “classic” we heard during the opening credits, and they begin their rehearsed dance. Everything is going smoothly; they’re in sync, and their families watch with a mix of tears, smiles, and cameras. Suddenly, static noises and pops interrupt as Ivan’s equipment malfunctions again, forcing Charlie and Emma to stop mid-dance.

IVAN
Why does that keep... Sorry guys!
Two seconds!

He rushes to fix the problem, reattaching his cables, but nothing works. Suddenly, a commotion erupts at Blake and Misha’s table, a heated debate now involving multiple guests. Emma is full of paranoia and certain her story is about to be exposed.

EMMA
(whispering)
What’s going on?

CHARLIE
(whispering)
I don’t know.

The music remains paused as guests shift their attention between the dance floor and the commotion at Misha's table. Overwhelmed by intense stares, Emma storms out of the room the moment the music resumes, leaving Charlie frozen at the center of the dance floor.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Emma!

Confusion spreads among the guests. As Emma walks out of the room, she sees Blake, who is now fuming. Blake rises and strides purposefully toward Charlie, suddenly punching him square in the face, knocking him out cold. Emma stands in the doorway, observing from afar, horror-stricken.

BLAKE
You kissed Misha you piece of shit?!

MISHA
Blake!

Panic ensues, guests either scatter or rush to intervene. Amidst the wedding chaos, Charlie's out cold on the floor, bleeding, while Blake towers over him. Alan and Jill rush over to help Charlie, while Misha is flustered, tears streaming down her face.

ALAN
What the hell is going on?

Mike jumps in to push Blake away.

MIKE
Hey, hey, hey!

BLAKE
He sexually harassed Misha!

JILL
What?!

MISHA
Please, stop!

BLAKE
(to Misha)
THAT'S WHAT YOU JUST TOLD ME!

MISHA
Calm down! PLEASE!

Jill tries helping Charlie up, but he's completely out of it.

JILL
Charlie! Charlie!
(then to Alan)
He's not responding! Call an ambulance!

JILL (CONT'D)
He’s unconscious!

ALAN
I’m calling the police.

BLAKE
Good!! Maybe they can arrest Emma too!

MISHA
Blake! Stop!

BLAKE
What!? They should all know!

Charlie begins to regain his senses. Blake becomes aggressive again, Mike now having to restrain him. Charlie attempts to get back on his feet but stumbles headfirst into a large decorative flower arrangement, blood dripping from his face. People are screaming.

EXT. WEDDING VENUE - MEANWHILE

Emma storms off from the venue, hitching up her wedding dress, a mix of stress, confusion, and sadness swirling inside her. She's not sure where she's headed, she just needs to get away. We follow her for a whole minute, the noise of the commotion gradually fading away.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Emma walks along, her dress getting dragged on the long, deserted road, now far from the venue, hoping to escape.

INT/EXT. WEDDING VENUE - LATER

Back at the venue, Ivan struggles to get the music going for an empty dance floor as chaos erupts. Guests scatter, desperately searching for Emma and calling her name. The scene rapidly shifts among our key characters: Jill, Alan, Roger, Sarah, Alice, Rachel, and Mike, all frantically trying to manage the situation. They make unsuccessful calls to Emma, console Charlie, contact the police, or seek solace in drinks. Outside, Blake and Misha have an intense quarrel while waiting for their ride. Amidst the turmoil, Charlie sits on a chair, holding a napkin to his face to stem the bleeding.

CHARLIE
Turn off the fucking music! Please!

INT. CHARLIE AND EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Charlie enters the dark apartment, flips on the hallway light, revealing his badly bruised face.

CHARLIE
Emma?!

Nothing. Complete silence. He checks the bedroom, also empty. He takes out his phone and dials a number.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Hey... She’s not here either... I don’t know... I’ll keep trying, but... No, maybe a hotel or something. I’m sure she’s fine. Ok. Yes, I’ll call if I hear anything. You do the same... OK. Good night.

After hanging up, he struggles to remove his shoes, which have caused sores on his feet. In the bathroom, he checks his reflection, noting his bruised lip and a chipped front tooth. Then, sitting in the living room, he attempts to call Emma, but it goes straight to voicemail.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Emma. It’s me again. I’m home. Please call me back. At least just to let me know you’re OK.

He hangs up the phone and leans back, his tuxedo disheveled. A long, silent emptiness fills the room as he sits there, lost and alone. He then gets up, turns on the stereo, and searches for something on his phone. After a few seconds, "I Love This Life" by The Blue Nile starts playing. The upbeat silliness of the song takes us back to the beginning of the story, sharply contrasting with his current emotional state. The camera remains fixed on his face in real-time. He first smiles and chuckles, but gradually becomes more emotional as he listens. He starts tearing up, and as the song progresses, he breaks into a full bawl, everything he's been bottling up finally pouring out. We stay in this single take almost to the end of the song.

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie walks through the streets, wearing sneakers and a jacket over his tux, on his way to the Woodland Diner, the only open place on the block, its cold fluorescent lights shining through the windows.

INT. WOODLAND DINER - NIGHT

Charlie, in his tuxedo and with a bruised face, looks conspicuously out of place at the diner, filled with a small crowd of diners and those seeking refuge. He orders a cheeseburger with fries and sits alone, observing the patrons: a lively group of friends in their mid-twenties having partied all night, a homeless man sipping a soda staring out the window, and an Uber driver listening to a podcast on speaker, loudly. Suddenly, Emma enters, wearing a puffer coat over her wedding dress. They lock eyes momentarily before she walks past him to order. Confused, Charlie watches, and waits, as she returns with her food.

EMMA
Hi...

CHARLIE
Hey...

EMMA
Mind if I sit?

CHARLIE
No, of course...

Emma sits down. Charlie stares at her for a long time, then tears starts falling.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I’m sorry... I’m so--

EMMA
Do you live around here?

CHARLIE
What?

EMMA
Feel like I’ve seen you before...

CHARLIE
What are you talking about?

EMMA
Just that I’ve seen you here before, I come here sometimes too.

Charlie still doesn’t understand.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I’m Emma by the way..

She puts her hand forward. Charlie suddenly understands and grabs her hand.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What's your name?

CHARLIE
Charlie... I uh... I live two blocks from here.

EMMA
Right... What happened to your face?

CHARLIE
I uh... Got into a fight... I was trying to save a woman from being robbed. Just now.

EMMA
Oh really?

CHARLIE
Yeah... This guy just... Stole her baby, actually, from her stroller, and I had to stop him.

EMMA
She was out walking her baby in the middle of the night?

CHARLIE
Yeah... I thought that was odd too.

EMMA
Wow. That's so brave of you.

CHARLIE
Thank you...

EMMA
Well it's so nice to meet you Charlie.

CHARLIE
Nice to meet you too Emma.

They stare at each other, looking disheveled and exhausted, but with a hint of happiness in their eyes.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Emma... If we’re doing this there’s something I gotta get off my chest first... Something I haven’t told you.

Emma is immediately frightened by the prospect, but after a beat, she leans over to him.

EMMA
Whisper it in my ear.

She turns her deaf ear towards him. He hesitates for a second, but accepts the offer, leans over and whispers his secret.

**CUT TO CREDITS.**